Feb. 1972

Bing

DEDICATED TO THE GREATEST OF THEM ALL
- AND THE LUCKIEST ADMIRERS
IN THE WORLD !

EDITED BY:

JOHN BASSETT.

MAGAZINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE: ISSUE NO. 25. FEB. 1972

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FEBRUARY 1972

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NEW MEMBERS

The ICC has pleasure in welcoming the "newer fellers" (and girls!) who join us with this, the February issue of "BING".

The
INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE
presents

ISSUE 25

FEBRUARY 1972

EDITORIAL

It is my happy task to guide the club magazine through another exciting year of Crosbyana. Whether you believe that Bing will be 68 or 71 this year (and isn't it about time that we all came to an agreement on this matter?) it is quite remarkable that after 45 years in the business, he still retains number one position, he still possesses the magic personality, and he still has the voice....and this is 1972! It needs some thinking about! How anybody can dismiss these thoughts with one shrug of the shoulders is beyond my powers of comprehension. Certainly, the compilers of the Guinness Book of Records continue to recognise Bing's unparalleled achievements. Read for yourself their entry in the current edition...

> Most Successful Solo Recording Artist On 9 June 1960 the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce presented Harry Lillis (alias Bing) Crosby, Jnr. (b. 2 May 1904 at Tacoma Washington) with a platinum disc to commemorate a sale of 200,000,000 records from the 2,600 singles and 125 albums he had recorded. On 15 Sept. 1970 he received a second platinum disc for selling 300,650,000 discs with Decca. It was then established that his global life-time sales on 88 labels in 28 countries totalled, according to royalty reports, 362,000,000. His first commercial recording was "I've Got the Girl" recorded on 18 Oct. 1926 (master number W142785 (Take 3) issued on the Columbia label).

This is probably one of the biggest annual 'plugs' that Bing is given, and when you consider that 6,000,000 copies of the book have now been produced (10 editions in the United States and translations into Czech, Danish, Dutch, French, Finnish, German, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Spanish and Swedish), that's some plug! The compilers, Norris and Ross McWhirter, deserve a special word of praise from the ICC. The 18th edition includes the photograph of Bing's second platinum disc, as described by Leslie Gaylor in the November issue of "BING".

A TIME TO BE JOLLY!

In December, we saw the long-awaited appearance of Bing's new Christmas album, but not before time! I impatiently reached a seven day count-down to Christmas before finally arriving home with a copy, although it appears that the 45-single had already been in the shops about a fortnight before this. Enquiries made throughout Southend-on-Sea show that the L.P. has sold extremely well. On one occasion, when attempting to purchase a copy for a friend, I discovered that one of the town's largest record shops, W.H.Smith & Sons, had sold out, and in another large store the staff expressed their surprise that the album had been selling so well. And I don't wonder, for this collection must surely rate high amongst Bing's finest recording sessions. From all aspects of production and presentation it reigns supreme, and the sleeve notes written by Sonny Burke are the finest tribute to Bing that I have ever had the pleasure of reading. No club member can surely be without the album at this late stage, so there

is no need for a full description within these pages. However, I thought it may prove interesting to list each song and award it marks out of 100, in order to give members some idea of your editor's personal favourites.

A Time To Be Jolly	75
I Sing Noel	100
'Round And 'Round The Christmas Tree	100
The First Family Of Christmas	100
The Song Of Christmas	95
A Christmas Toast	90
And The Bells Rang	90
Christmas Is	90
When You Trim Your Christmas Tree	95
Christmas Is Here To Stay!	95

Now let me say this....it is my opinion that if Bing had never recorded "White Christmas", "Silent Night" and all those other wonderful songs and carols, this L.P. alone would earn him the title of the world's greatest singer of Christmas music. After hearing the album, a friend of mine stated that it was impossible to imagine that Bing was 70 years of age ...."It's still the same Bing of 25 to 30 years ago", he added. Another friend, equally overjoyed with the album, has predicted that Bing will make a new recording of "White Christmas" on his 80th birthday! This remains to be seen, but it does seem appropriate that if Bing <u>is</u> going to restrict his recording activities to an absolute minimum, then it's a good idea if he concentrates entirely on Christmas music, for in this field there are none to surpass him. The thought of a new Christmas L.P. every year seems too good to materialise, but we can all hope, can't we? Incidentally, it amused me to hear Bing 'drop an h' in the song "The First Family Of Christmas"....listen to the part where he sings, "And now in our 'umble way, we bow our heads and pray...." It doesn't sound like a recording fault, but I could be wrong!

The 45-single, containing two tracks from the album, was originally issued in America over a year ago in time for Christmas 1970. In recent months, copies of this rare disc were being sold in this country for exorbitant prices, and I know of one such copy having changed hands for £7. I reckon I was lucky....I was offered the disc for 75p!

Bing certainly got plenty of radio time over the Christmas period, as you will read for yourself in some of our articles this month, and I was fortunate to hear the following tracks played in various programmes on Radio-2....

10th Dec. "Heartaches By The Number"
11th Dec. "And The Bells Rang"
17th Dec. "Silver Bells"
19th Dec. "We Wish You The Merriest"
23rd Dec. "White Christmas" ('47 version as usual!)
9th Jan. "On a Slow Boat to China"

Perhaps someone can explain to me why the <u>original</u> 1942 version of "White Christmas" rarely gets played? To my ear, the earlier recording is far superior, particularly in quality of reproduction, whereas I find that the choir on the later version appear to have been 'over-recorded', thus resulting in slight distortion on the louder notes. This applies to every copy of this version in my collection.

On Thursday, 30th Dec. at 9.00 p.m. I tuned in to a Radio-2 programme called "Tony Christie Sings", in which he was accompanied by a group known as The Grumbleweeds. During the course of the programme, some very talented members of the group interspersed the songs by impersonating 20 or more famous T.V. and film personalities....stars such as Jimmy Durante, Peter Lorre, David Frost, etc., but for me, the highlight of the show was a brilliant take-off of Bing and Louis Armstrong in the opening bars of "Now You Has Jazz". It was superb to say the least, and if this particular routine is a regular feature of the group's repertoire,

then a close watch on their future appearances is thoroughly recommended. The programme immediately preceding this is the very popular "Time For Old Time" in which Benny Lee acts as host and vocalises on various numbers throughout the show. The more I hear Mr.Lee, the more I become convinced that he is a "Crosby man" at heart! With very little effort on his part, I'm sure he could give quite a convincing impersonation of Bing - and on numbers such as "If I Had My Way" and "Goodnight Sweetheart", it's almost as good as the real thing. His timing and phrasing suggest that at some time or another he has tried to model his voice on that of the Maestro. The resemblance cannot be regarded as a mere coincidence.

Part of a radio quiz show recently ("Treble Chance Quiz") featured a round of "True or False" questions. One of the statements given to the panel was supposed to have been, "The greatest selling gramophone record of all time is Bing Crosby's White Christmas", but a quick-thinking member interrupted question-master Alun Williams after the first five words of the sentence, by enthusiastically shouting out, "White Christmas - Bing Crosby!" Somebody obviously knows his Crosby, but then again, who can ever doubt the truthfulness of such an outstanding fact?

Television viewing was enhanced over the Festive Season by the showing of "White Christmas" on Christmas Eve morning, and "High Society" on Christmas Sunday. (The latter film being shown on Southern regions only, and again more recently on the London region). Bert Bishop will be enlightening us more fully on these and other items in his T.V. critique, so I won't linger too long in this department. The "Sisters" routine from "White Christmas" was featured in the BBC-2 programme, "Film Night" on 1st January, following a short interview with Danny Kaye. The 1959 film "Say One For Me" recently commenced a special series of 'Spectacular' Hollywood Musicals on BBC-2, and I made a special point of altering previously made arrangements in order to see it, having missed the film when it was first televised over a year ago. But what a disappointment it turned out to be! Bing's singing was the only thing which prevented me from switching off! The opening titles made me anticipate a film of great reverence and religious meaning, but the resulting action proved to be nothing but an anticlimax. In my opinion, the only highlight of the film was the scene in which Bing re-arranges the figures in the crib, while his voice is heard 'off-screen' singing the main title song.

Many members will be surprised to learn that Bing's name has been appearing on cinema screens all over the country, in connection with a recent X-certificate film! It happens to be "Willard"....the story of a young man's power over a pack of rats and how they eventually turn against him in the final few horrifying minutes of the film. Just in case you're wondering where Bing comes into it, the film happens to be a "Bing Crosby Production"! This announcement, together with the initials "B.C.P." in huge letters, appears on the screen prior to the main opening titles. There's Crosbyana everywhere you look!

THE A TO Z OF BING CROSBY

Now for a few words about our latest ICC publication, the "A TO Z" as it is becoming known. By the time you read this editorial, production will be well under way. The covers are now printed and I've been kept very busy with the stencilling of the project throughout the best part of December and January. The results of many months of hard work will soon be in your hands, and I would like to thank everybody for being so patient with us, although I'm sure you will agree that it is unwise to treat any project, particularly of a discographical nature, as a 'rush job'. Our secretary, Reg Bristo, will soon be announcing the exact price of this publication.

CROSBY FILM LISTING

Regrettably, we have been refused permission to reprint a comprehensive film listing of Bing, as published by The National Board Of Review Of Motion Pictures, Inc. in their June/July 1968 issue of "Films In Review". However, we have been informed that copies of this issue are still available

from the publishers at the price of one dollar each, postpaid in advance, and we recommend this magazine to all members who have requested a complete list of Bing's films. A well-written biography accompanies the listing, and there are some interesting photographs. Write to the National Board's offices at 31 Union Square West, New York, NY 10003.

Now I'll leave you to enjoy the current edition of "BING", but before I sign off, I would like to thank all those members who kindly sent me Christmas cards last year....a friendly gesture which was well appreciated. Don't forget....unlimited space is available in the magazine for your articles and letters, but please ensure that your handwriting is legible! Our de-coding staff will soon be asking for a pay rise! Until next time, my very best wishes to you all.

JOHN BASSETT

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B I N G - S N I P P E T S

by LESLIE GAYLOR

First of all, may I thank all those who sent me Christmas cards, and I'm happy to say that I shall be retaining once again the card sent to me by Ron and Joyce Bosley.

Now at the time of writing, I have to report a little piece of information from "Polydor Records", in which they state, "Bing Crosby is featured in one of our forthcoming campaigns", but at the present moment I have no further details regarding this statement. However, I have instructed them to contact the ICC when they have further information to impart.

I spotted the following item in the Daily Mail on 17 January:- ""The latest craze personality among the high camp followers is, believe it or not, Bing Crosby: the Old Groaner's films and records are being reissued in plenty to appease the appetites of those palates already tiring of Astaire and the more obvious heroes of the overworked Thirties' Cult". This item also received a very fine mention in the BBC radio programme, "After Seven", in which John Timpson said that things were really happening to 'Dear old Bing', and that there was still some sanity on this earth. A good mention for Bing without a doubt!

After repeated orders at three dealers shops, I finally obtained Bing's album "A Time To Be Jolly" on 15th December. The record was in a November catalogue and Polydor claim that it was available from 12 November, but I would say that this was "on paper" only. The "Melody Maker" and "New Musical Express" didn't review the album until after their Christmas issues had come out....indeed, another pointer to it being late. Polydor accepted my third request to send a copy to BBC Radio Solent, and believe it or not, they despatched it a week after Christmas! However, my personal action was a more improved one, as I sent Radio Solent a copy before Christmas, and tracks from it were broadcast. I can well see why those members who have written to me are concerned about the late release

of this L.P., as everyone knows that Bing will not make records if they're just going to lay on dealers' shelves, or if the promotion is poor.

My view on this album is that despite the detected little strain here and there, Ol' Bing is in real good form - he sounds much better than on some of those he recorded in the 1940's. The eight newer tracks would have been better improved had the balance been in Bing's favour. This business of covering Bing's voice with the accompaniment, resulting in inaudible words, is not a good thing. The two remaining tracks, as issued on the single, are much better, as most members have already noted, and I lost count of the number of times I heard them played on the radio. The songs are very good when you get to know them, and I thought that the album is very pleasant.

Brian Matthew also thought the album was good, and used it five times in his radio programme, "Album Time". As a matter of fact, he gave me a couple of 'plugs' which brought in some interesting mail.

I was amused by David Frost recently in his new series of radio programmes, "Frost At The Phonograph" in which he stated that Frank Sinatra was the "King of Song". I wrote up several times to say that if David Frost's view was correct, then Bing must have been reciting poetry during his long career! Comedian Charlie Chester backed me up in his radio programme by saying that he always regarded Bing as having the 'edge' on Sinatra.

Finally, if anyone is interested, I have just received word from the World Library Of Sacred Music that their album, "What Child Is This" is still available. The amount to send is $5.90 for the record, plus $1.50 for postage. The total of $7.40 equals £2.93. The address is as follows: World Library Publications Inc., 2145 Central Parkway, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45214, U.S.A.

In closing, may I thank all those members who contributed to the last issue of "BING" and made it worthwhile reading..

B I N G I N M A D A M E T U S S A U D S ?

by THE EDITOR

Visitors to the world-famous Madame Tussaud's Waxworks in Marylebone Road, London, (especially if they're Crosby collectors!) are bound to have noted the striking omission of the greatest show-business entertainer of all time....the Old Groaner. After all, if Sinatra can be represented in wax, along with artistes such as Julie Andrews and Richard Burton, why can't Bing? If you are familiar with my particular brand of humour, you should not be surprised to learn that I recently put finger to typewriter key and sent the following letter to the exhibition....

Dear Sirs,

WOT ! NO BING ?

In anticipation,
J.D.Bassett.

Imagine how pleasing it was to receive this reply from the Managing Director....

Dear Sir,

KEEP HOPEING

Yours faithfully,
E.V.Gatacre.

So it looks as though this amusing exchange of correspondence may be effective in prompting the modelling of Bing, providing he agrees, of course. All we can do now is await the results.

B I S H O P ' S B E N C H

Sit a spell!....more from the pen of BERT BISHOP

In last spring's edition of "BING", Reg, our secretary, wrote an interesting piece on the possibilities of an alternative signature tune for Bing, concluding by suggesting that readers might like to put forward their own ideas on the subject. Unless I've not been paying proper attention, nobody has yet taken Reg up on this. So, for what they are worth, here are just a few of my own thoughts.

Firstly, one must take a look at the motives for one's choice. A list of these might read: period, title, lyric, popularity, tempo and personal preference. For me, Bing's existing 'theme song' qualifies for three of these....period, tempo and popularity, and he did have a hand in writing the lyric.

Since most ballads are concerned with love, or affection for places - "I'm Coming Virginia", "Muddy Water", "Ol' Man River", etc. - it is virtually impossible to select one from that category with a suitable lyric. That leaves us with the novelty number, of which the bulk, some half-dozen, were Rhythm Boys ditties, slightly premature and hardly suited to the purpose; philosophical songs, which are the ones most likely to produce an appropriate lyric; a few 'various', mainly concerned with dancing - "Happy Feet", "Five Step", etc. - plus, of course, the early carols. All of which are totally unambiguous and cannot be taken for other than what they are.

Leaving aside Reg's two appropriate selections, "Please" and "Learn To Croon", I find no one song that is totally apt, which is not surprising bearing in mind the wide range of Bing's vocal accomplishments. Keeping within the early thirties 'period' classification for my selections, my nomination for title would be, "I've Got The World On A String" - a pertinent comment I feel. Looking for a suitable lyric, one could well turn to "Livin' In The Sunlight, Lovin' In The Moonlight, Having A Wonderful Time", and find many a line that expresses Bing's carefree attitude to life - especially in those early years.

Ray Noble's song, "Goodnight Sweetheart", written in conjunction with Messrs. Campbell and Connelly, must be one of the strongest contenders for a popularity poll; it has lasted down the years mainly on account of its waltz tempo, but is probably too connected in most people's minds with the 'last waltz', at functions where folks still do dance, to be associated with one person.

Personally, I consider tempo to be of great importance in a signature tune, and that it should reflect the nature of the artiste's performance or act. Think how perfectly "The Dance Of The Cuckoos" introduces the knockabout comedy of Laurel and Hardy, or the cheerful rhythm of Bob Hope's "Thanks For The Memory", with its hint of humorous sentiment, matches the traditional suggestion of pathos that the true comedian conveys. Similarly, "Where The Blue Of The Night" has just the right relaxed sound for Bing to sing or whistle, yet still retains its star matching quality for the big production arrangement, as in a T.V. show introduction. Two other numbers that Bing recorded around that era fit into that spot very neatly...."Without A Song" and "Sweet And Lovely", the former having the edge with regard to the appropriateness of the lyric but the latter being more typical of Bing's material of the day.

Then we come to personal preference: as I sit writing this article I pronounce my choice to be, quite definately, "Straight From The Shoulder, Right From The Heart To You", but by the time you get to read that statement, no doubt my answer would be quite different - such is the tremendous appeal of Bing's voice on so many songs in the early thirties! However, a positive and unalterable decision must be made here, and as I think back over the great number of records that Bing has made, and the vast pleasure that he has given to us all, all I can say is "Thanks" - how say you?

How nice to be proved wrong! My prognostication in the August 1971 issue of "BING" that he is unlikely to 'wax' again, was made just as the news was about to break that Bing had recorded ten more tracks which enlarged his Christmas 1970 single into a Christmas 1971 L.P. No doubt, much will be written within these pages commenting upon this delightful and remarkable collection of Yuletide songs, but it is worth mentioning that Brian Matthew, after playing "'Round And 'Round The Christmas Tree", commented, on his programme "Album Time", that Bing had come out of record making retirement especially to launch the new 'Daybreak' label for his friend, Sonny Burke.

In the same issue, Tony Bulmer wrote how he had 'discovered' Bing within the pages of the book, "The Kon-Tiki Expedition", and went on to quote the relevant lines. Since then, a young friend, knowing of my interest in Bing Crosby, drew my attention to page 45 of "Poor No More", by Robert Ruark, first published 1959, now on sale as a Corgi paperback. Extracts read as follows:

> "Mr. Botts the bootlegger, had not yet been discovered by Craig, Russ Columbo had not yet shot himself in an accident, and Mr. Crosby was just beginning to give "When The Blue Of The Night" a real thrashing on a radio programme which professed to sell a cigar in which human saliva was not a principal ingredient....it was the fall of 1931.
>
> At the time, Craig Price had not heard of anybody currently famous except Bing Crosby, Reg Grange, Babe Ruth, and Russ Columbo".

Robert Ruark had certainly done some accurate research at the time he wrote his novel, concerning Bing's first radio broadcast (September 1931), but this broadcast was not for any specific company. The Cremo Cigar tie-up came after this and no actual date is known by discographers. It may well have followed close upon the September date, but sadly, no recordings of Bing singing "Old Blue" appear to be in existance - maybe Mr. Ruark heard them for himself....even so, he does not seem to have been favourably impressed!

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EDITOR'S FOOTNOTE

While on the subject of Bing's name being used in novels, the following item was pointed out to me recently by a friend at work....

From "Lay Her Among The Lilies" by James Hadley Chase.
(Panther Books, Page 57, Chapter 2)

> "Good morning, Mr. Malloy," she said, showing her nice white little teeth. She had a snub nose and puppy-dog manners. You felt you had only to pat her for her to wag her tail. A nice kid. Eighteen if she was a day, and only two heart throbs: me and Bing Crosby.

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BING TOPICS FROM HULL

by ALF FARROW

Well, folks, I sincerely hope that you all had a very good Christmas, and you have now shaken off the effects of the wine, the heavy traditional dinner, toys, and all the other wonderful things that make Christmas what it is. It is 25 years ago since I last had such a quiet Christmas as the one just gone. Other years our house has been full of relatives and their children, but last Yuletide we had only one visitor....a Brother-in-law.

All three of my L.P.'s of Christmas with Bing were played, including the new one, "A Time To Be Jolly" and that made the day right, as far as I was concerned, anyway! This L.P. will be reviewed elsewhere by others, so all I will say here is that it is a very good album, excellently put together, and a credit to Bing. I am not going to be harshly critical about it - others have done that elsewhere - but I will not say more than what I've said above. After all, we cannot expect a Bing of the 40's or 50's, and we should be pleased for small mercies, and with Tempus Fugit and all that, we got a very pleasant L.P.....but how ill-timed was the release date!

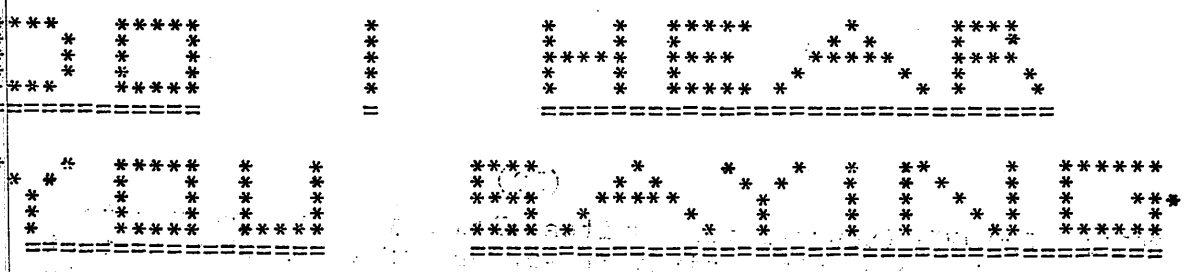
1972 now!...and what's in store for us this year? Are we to see the long-awaited Coral releases? Or have they been shelved like a lot more other material? We shall see!

Dave Smith, the bookmaker in "Coronation Street", was heard to say when someone reminded him that it was Christmastime, "Christmas? What is Christmas? Just an excuse to drink, eat ... holly and Bing Crosby!" I can't make up my mind what the context of this was supposed to be, but Dave Smith being slightly inebriated could be excused for having a loose tongue! Later on in the programme, he said to Maggie Clegg, after having bought her a drink, "Do you know, talking of Bing Crosby, you remind me of Rosemary Clooney?" Crosbyana everywhere!

Three films over Christmas and I only saw one, but it was the one I missed on its tour of the cinemas...."High Society"....and I thought it was great! I taped the whole film and will be busy later editing the sound-track.

I have in my possession, with the permission of the Hull Public Libraries, a book called "The Dance Band Era", and Bing is mentioned therein five times. First quote:- "Soon after the completion of "King Of Jazz", Bing Crosby left Whiteman to start his career as the most famous popular vocalist of his day, but it is worth recalling one Whiteman story about him. The Whiteman band was undertaking a lengthy engagement at the Paramount Theatre in New York, at a reputed fee of 12,500 dollars a week; the only stipulation being that Bing should not be allowed to sing solo! Soon after, Bing started his solo career." Second quote:- "Lyman, whose brother Mike was the owner of the Trent Cafe in Los Angeles, at which Bing Crosby secured his first professional job...." Third quote:- "Gus Arnheim, in 1930, engaged The Rhythm Boys from Whiteman's band as a feature attraction, and his nightly two-hour radio broadcast helped Bing Crosby to become widely known. Records made at this time - "Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams" and "I Surrender Dear" - are typical, and feature impeccable arrangements (usually by Jimmy Grier, who later became a well known band leader himself), assued musicianship and a pleasantly individual sound, but apart from "One More Time", an unusually spirited performance, are now sought after mainly for the Crosby vocals...." Fourth quote:- "From late 1933 to the break-up in 1938, Fox's main vocalist was Denny Dennis, a stylist who at times owed much to Bing Crosby with such titles as "June In January", "May I" and "Everything I Have Is Yours"...."

I started the New Year right anyway....my son, David, was married on New Years Day, and one of the two hymns we sang in church was "Adeste Fideles"! Bing's in there again, and very welcome that day! Well, that's all for now - Best Wishes to you all for 1972. Cheers!



A SELECTION FROM THE EDITOR'S POSTBAG

JOHN FLEMING (Oxon) writes: Congratulations on an excellent Christmas issue, credit also to Reg Bristo who never fails to stimulate and temporary satisfy the constant thirst for knowledge on anything appertaining to Bing. I have long admired his easy going style of writing. It is informative and a pleasure to read.

KEN CROSSLAND (Leeds) writes: I'm sure you agree that Christmas 1971 was all the more merrier with the issue of Bing's new album. Being a fan particularly of his recent work, it was especially pleasing to me. It is clear that Bing has lost none of his magic, and his voice is as good as ever. My favourite tracks are "'Round And 'Round The Christmas Tree" and "And The Bells Rang". The album was reviewed on Radio-2 in "Album Time" and several tracks were played in the weeks up to Christmas. D.J. Brian Matthew pointed out that Bing was singing "well within himself" and I must agree with this opinion. The 'balance' could have been better, as the orchestra and choir tend to 'drown' Bing, and I am reminded of the albums "Thoroughly Modern Bing" and "Return To Paradise Islands" where this problem was encountered. On the two tracks recorded a year ago, "And The Bells Rang" and "A Time To Be Jolly", the balance is much better and we can see that Bing's voice does not need this 'cover'.

RICHARD MUIRHEAD (Edinburgh) writes: I find the new Christmas album an excellent recording, and both cover and sleeve notes are quite impressive. The title song being very catchy, it was a good choice for the 45-single, and with the right type of exposure, it could make an impression on the charts. All I can say is that this is an album which Bing can be proud of, one with excellent orchestrations and, of course, completely original vocalising. December 1971 proved to be a very lucky month for me. One week, whilst hunting through a local store, I noticed that the record department had split up the Readers Digest set "The Great Stars", and the individual L.P.'s were being sold for 87½p each. I managed to obtain the only two they had which featured Bing, the tracks being "Dream A Little Dream Of Me" and "From Monday On". But that isn't all....in a new record shop in Edinburgh, I found a section of Crosby records containing no less than 15 albums, the majority of which being the Ace Of Hearts issues. With money received at Christmas, I was fortunate to find at least five albums which I didn't already own. Above all this, I was thrilled to receive a Christmas card from Bing....certainly a great surprise! Some while ago, I wrote to Coral Records asking for information on the proposed Crosby releases, but was quickly informed that no such material is planned at present. Part of the reply reads, "Maybe within the next five or six months we will have more definite ideas". Well, it would seem that there is just a slight hope for further issues, but that's all.

REG HAMPTON (Southampton) writes: Thank you very much for sending me your magazine "BING", of which the quality exceeded my expectation. Please find enclosed my subscription, and would you please reserve a copy of the "A TO Z" for me.
(EDITOR's comment: With pleasure!)

Miss BRENDA MILES (Surrey) writes: I noticed whilst glancing through the current issue that there isn't one page which fails to mention Bing! Each issue gets better, and it certainly appears that you enjoy being Editor by the way you handle the job!

NORMAN TOOGOOD (Southampton) writes: You may be interested to know that I wrote to Bing recently, mainly in support of the letter sent him by Stan Davis, regarding a visit by Bing to this city. Today, I received a reply from Bing in which he dealt with a good many of my comments, but made no mention of Stan Davis' proposal, so I feel that it does not look too hopeful. I am now managing to add to my collection at quite a fast rate, and I calculate that I have 550 songs. This year (1972) marks the 40th year of my interest in Bing Crosby....40 years!....I wonder if any other members can beat that?

JOHHNY JOYCE (Staffs.) writes: One of my own special favourites of Bing's records has always been "Down By The River". I first heard this in Brussels on my girl friend's radio. (She's now my wife). I thought that the record was fantastic, but I just couldn't obtain a copy of it anywhere. Records were hard to come by in those days, even though they were still in the catalogues. I wrote to my mother in England and she ordered it in every shop in Wolverhampton without success. It eventually arrived at each shop three years later, and what a thrill it was to put it on my old gramophone. Strange that they should all receive copies of the disc at the same time! As it happens, it was my brother who eventually obtained the record for me, so my dear old Mum had worn out all that shoe leather in vain! The disc turned out to be a great favourite of my parents, and won my Dad over to the Bing ranks. I still have a tape of my Dad 'duetting' with Bing on this disc. Dad (no longer with us, bless his soul) was a choirman and a keen enthusiast of Caruso and Gigli, so converting him into a Crosby follower was quite something! It compares with my son who is trying to convert me to his soul music....believe me, he hasn't got a chance!

FRANK ASHURST (Lancs.) writes: I would like to congratulate you on your magazine. It is improving all the time and the November issue was great. The idea of changing the publication months of "BING" to March, June, September and December is a good one, I feel, as we could then have a proper Christmas edition. I hope that Reg agrees. Watching "The Golden Shot" recently, I noticed that one of the prizes included the Bing Crosby Treasury issued by the Longines Symphonette Society!

BILL WHITE (Essex) writes: I've just finished reading through the current issue of "BING" for the second time. I must say that it compares more than favourably with the other magazine devoted to Bing. The layout is neat and easy to read, and in fact you could call it 'clean', and I like that. I see that there is some dissent over the cover, some saying that each cover should be uniform. I can't entirely agree on this, as I said to Reg, a different cover for each issue gives it an individuality and adds to its attraction.

LIONEL PAIRPOINT (London) writes: I had great difficulty obtaining a copy of the new Christmas L.P. in November. I was treated like an idiot for my pains because, naturally, "if it's not in the catalogue, there's no such record and there never will be!" How impatient I get when there's a new Bing record on the horizon! I was interested to read Bert Bishop's contribution regarding Bing's appearances in the films of Bob Hope, and in particular, his explanation of the line, "Go peddle your rack, shellac" in "The Princess and the Pirate". As we know from "Put It There, Pal", Bing and Bob were always game for a blatant dig at each other's radio sponsors. 'Rack Shellac' in this case simply means toothpaste....a piece of slang invented solely for this particular gag, I suspect.....an allusion to Hope's association with Pepsodent.
(EDITOR's comment: I'm sure that Bert will be interested in your solution to the mystery phrase. I trust that the Christmas L.P. was worth waiting for!)

DON LOVE (Herts.) writes: You may be interested to learn that I now need about 50 more discs to complete the Bing collection. A short while ago, I got a copy of "From Monday On" on Biltmore 1017, backed with "Lonely Melody", which is non-Bing, of course. However, the labels are printed as follows:- "Lonely Melody" by Bix and Bing with Paul Whiteman's Orch.,

and "From Monday On" by Bix Beiderbecke with Paul Whiteman's Orch. Have you ever come across this one, John? I'm wondering if all the discs were issued with the labels misprinted? To make matters worse, the songs are also transposed!....thus, "From Monday On" is the "Lonely Melody" side, and vice-versa!
(EDITOR's comment: Crickey! Attention, Bob Roberts....have you got this one?)

JACK DOUGAN (N.Ireland) writes: Congratulations on the 'bumper' issue of "BING" last November. You're doing a magnificent job. Bert Bishop's column was particularly interesting and amusing. There is a film which Bert doesn't mention, called "Paris Holiday" which starred the French comic Fernandel. The opening scene is similar to "Son Of Paleface" in which Bing is seen driving a saloon car, and Bob remarks, "I can guarantee, folks, that this fella is definately not in the picture!" In the film, "The Joker Is Wild", the story of Joe E.Lewis, played by Frank Sinatra, Bing makes a brief appearance singing "June In January". We 'see' Bing as only a shadow on the wall, but of course the voice is unmistakable. While Bing is singing, Mitzi Gaynor turns to Sinatra and says, "He's wonderful, isn't he?" He certainly is! In another Sinatra film, "Meet Danny Wilson", Raymond Burr, a night club owner none too happy about losing Sinatra to a rival club, says "Personally, I'm a Crosby fan". "Should make Bing happy!" replies Frank. On Ulster Television, Tuesday 4th January, at 6.15 p.m., the programme "Daws Explores" flashed back to some of the top stars who have set foot on Irish soil. Among those seen were Chris Barber, Frankie Vaughan, Charlie Drake, Bob Hope, and, of course, Bing. The programme opened with Bing's arrival at Dublin airport. Bing stepped off the plane and was greeted with applause, surrounded by an eager and enthusiastic crowd. Then there followed an interview with Bing in which he spoke fondly of his golfing days in the Emerald Isle. Then we saw an interview with 'old ski-nose' who mentioned Bing's latest addition to the family...."You know, Crosby's just had an addition to the family - his seventh, I think. It's sorta puzzled the scientific world, and what worries me is that after seven comes eleven!" Back to Bing who closed the programme with a few bars of "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" to the delight of those present at the "Curragh" - a famous Irish racecourse. I believe this was the occasion when Bing's horse won the Derby. On 11th December I had the pleasure of a visit from Barry Adams, a new member to our great circle of Bing collectors. Barry stopped for about half an hour, discussing Bing's records and films and browsing through my collection. I was delighted when he invited my wife and I to his home the following evening, and to bring along my tape recorder and catch up on some Bing material which I had not yet added to the collection. It proved to be a memorable evening indeed, as Barry is a most enthusiastic follower of the Master, and I'm sure that he will be a great asset to the ICC.
The latest 'hearings' from my diary are as follows:-

16 Oct. "Little One" (Joe Henderson's 'Melody Time')
3 Nov. "Now You Has Jazz" ('Breakfast Special')
6 Nov. "Well, Did You Evah" (Ray Moore's 'Saturday Night')
25 Nov. "In A Little Spanish Town" ('Open House')
28 Nov. "I've Got Five Dollars" ('Family Favourites')
14 Dec. "Whispering" ('Breakfast Special')
17 Dec. "Silver Bells" ('Open House')

Looking forward to another great Bing year! A Happy New Year to all.
(EDITOR's comment: May I give a special word of thanks to Jack for supplying us with such a wealth of information for each issue of the magazine.)

JIMMY JOHNSON, Jnr. (U.S.A.) writes: I am enclosing a newspaper clipping of a letter which I sent in, to try and stir up some Crosby fans....

From: "The Richmond Times - Dispatch", 24 Oct. 1971:-

"Would you kindly mention to any of the Bing Crosby fans out there that there is an International Crosby Circle still active? It's located in dear old England and embraces about a dozen countries, including Canada and the U.S.A. Also, that there are about 50 copies of

his original "White Christmas" on 78 rpm, awaiting the first 50 who are still interested in Bing, or collecting his records and at no charge; just dial 353-7508. Many thanks....We'd like to activate all of his followers and start a movement towards a possible "Bing Crosby Story".

I received 20 answers to the letter - 10 good Bing enthusiasts, and 10 who just wanted a copy of the record. Either way, they'll be Bing-boosters every time they play the 78, and it's a sure bet they'll play it for others. I passed out three copies of the Readers Digest version of "Call Me Lucky", and they were genuinely appreciated. These I pick up at yard-sales and good-will shops when junking for records. They cost just a few cents each and are worth their weight in gold to collectors. Continued success and good health!

(EDITOR's comment: Sincere thanks, Jimmy, for posting along two copies of the Readers Digest volume for my own use. Your action was most thoughtful.)

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THE READER'S LETTER WE COULDN'T PUBLISH!....

At the time of typing this stencil, I've just received a communication from my friend Barrie Anderton, who is the English rep. of the AL JOLSON SOCIETY. He informs me that he has now joined the ICC, so perhaps we can persuade him to pen an article or two on Bing and Al. As much as I would have liked to publish his letter, it's more than I dare do!.... he's included one of his nasty 'jokes' about Bing, and although it made me laugh, I'm afraid it might offend a lot of our readers! Better luck next time, mate!

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CARTOON FROM THE "DAILY MIRROR", 13 January 1972

Girl beatnik to boy beatnik: "It doesn't mean you're past it, just because the rest of us don't remember this Bing Crosby guy!"

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C R O S B Y Q U O T E S

"I couldn't retire if I wanted to. I'd be throwing over 100 people out of work".

"I need the income. That's one of the things that keeps me going."

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THE RICHARD MUIRHEAD COLUMNS

This month, I find myself with so much to write about that I don't really know where to start. Perhaps I should begin at the most noteworthy event of the year - the appearance of "A TIME TO BE JOLLY". On this occasion, in my view, Bing has achieved a pinnacle. I can find, with all sincerity, no faults whatsoever with what I recognise as being one of the finest L.P.'s that Bing has ever produced. It is a masterpiece in every way, and I, for one will be playing it far into the summer months, for indeed, it is far too precious to hear only a few times a year. If Bing continues to sing to this degree, then we can all look forward to many more new, unique, renditions from the Maestro.

The television companies were more than good to us at Christmas, what with "White Christmas" on the very apt occasion of Christmas Eve, and "High Society" on Christmas Sunday, no members of the ICC have cause to complain. I also managed to catch Bing, as a guest star in the Yves Montand and Marilyn Monroe film which was shown on New Year's Day. The radio waves were also very good to us, giving on 'Late Night Extra' Christmas Eve an excellent telephone conversation with Bing, who told us just

how he would be spending Christmas. I managed to tape the spot and a text of the interview will appear along with this column, for all members who missed out on it. I caught two airings of Bing's new single....Ed Stewart played "And The Bells Rang" on Saturday 11th December, and "A Time To Be Jolly" was played on Breakfast Special on Monday 20th December. On that same day, Pete Murray's 'Open House' came live from a London theatre, and he closed the show with the 1955 recording of "White Christmas" in a rather unusual manner, for on this occasion Bing was accompanied by the entire audience and Max Bygraves, who had been a guest....it was quite a sound!

Early in December I wrote to Decca to inquire whether they could furnish me with any information on the five proposed Coral releases. I received the following reply:-

Dear Mr. Muirhead,

Thank you for your letter regarding Bing Crosby. At the moment we have no plans to release any L.P.'s on the Coral label featuring Bing, but serious thought is always given to artists like this and their material and how we can best present it to the public.

Maybe within the next five or six months we will have more definite ideas.

Yours faithfully,

JON DONALDSON.
Label Department.

Well, it would appear that we have just about 'had it' as far as the Coral releases go. Let's hope Daybreak provide us with more than just hope.

I was lucky enough to receive a Christmas card from Bing this year and I'm sure all who managed to see a copy of this card will agree that it is really fine. It shows the whole Crosby Family dressed in very seasonal red tunics standing in front of a roaring log fire. The huge Christmas tree close by, and the decorated room all go to make a wonderful photograph. I was surprised at the way in which Bing's family seem to have sprouted up all of a sudden. They all look very happy indeed. A few days after receiving the card, I found among the post another communication from Bing, thanking me for a present I had sent him for Christmas, and stating that he hoped he could manage to arrange a meeting the next time he is over here. He also enclosed a very unusual coloured photograph taken last Summer, showing him in fisherman's garb standing beside his boat and holding an enormous salmon, with three other equally proportioned fish at his feet. The river behind Bing appears to be a fisherman's dream come true. Needless to say, I was very pleased to receive the photo and this only goes to show what a really nice chap Bing is. So many other famous artistes show very little respect to their admirers. I realise that it must be a tremendous pressure to be a famous entertainer and also carry on a family life, but Bing has surely been under more pressure than any other artiste and yet he has never once given the elbow to his fans. This I admire in Bing very highly indeed.

As I write this, the 'Radio Times' carries an article and full page colour photo of Bing to introduce a new BBC-2 film series. Bing's "Say One For Me" is commencing this very promising series of musical films, and I was pleased to watch this film for the first time. It must surely be one of Bing's top ten films in my book, and what a beautiful song, "The Secret Of Christmas" is. I would think that this type of material merited a release at Christmas....the public must surely appreciate this type of song.

This year we can all look forward to the publication of the ICC's "The A to Z Of Bing Crosby". I hope that the project will be supported by fellow members, as so many projects have, in the past, been cancelled due to lack of support. I would like to say that I think John and Reg are doing a great job. The magazine is constantly improving. Keep up the good work lads!

At this point, I would like to put in a 'plug' for the ICC tie. I was pleased to find that Mr. Kringle was good enough to leave me one on

Christmas morning. I can only go along with John in that it is a real "must" for all members. The quality of the tie is top class, and for only 80p it's a real bargain!

I find now that I have written all my news and views of the present time. I hope they are of interest, and close this month's column with the hope that all our readers are well and that the Editor, Secretary and all Members of the ICC find that 1972 brings all that is wished.

RICHARD MUIRHEAD

(EDITOR's comment: "Who's Mr. Kringle" I thought to myself when I first received Richard's column in the post. A letter was quickly sent off, and back came Richard's prompt reply....
"With regard to your query as to the identity of 'Kris Kringle', he is none other than Father Christmas! This title was also alien to me until last Christmas Eve, for shortly after Bing's radio conversation, BBC-2 brought in Christmas Day with a very enjoyable and appropriate film presentation, "Miracle On 34th Street". It told the story of a very jolly old man with a long flowing white beard, who believed that he was Father Christmas, or as he and the majority of the cast referred to him...KRIS KRINGLE. I later inquired about this, and it seems that this is as legend puts it, the correct name of dear old Santa! I would suppose that this is more of an American observation, however it seems original and so I included it in my column. Incidentally, this is strengthened by the fact that Bing uses it in one of the titles from his new Christmas album. Listen to "A Christmas Toast" in which he sings, "...then you top it with a sprinkle of Mr. Kringle's twinkle...."
- So now you know!)

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TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN SHAW TAYLOR AND BING CROSBY

(Broadcast live, 24th December 1971 on "Late Night Extra", BBC)

SHAW: May I, on behalf of all our listeners here, be the very first to wish you a very Merry, Merry Christmas, Bing. Where exactly are you in the States at this moment?

BING: I'm now near San Francisco, California.

SHAW: And how will you be spending Christmas?

BING: Well, we're going to have a big time. We've been decorating the house and trimming the tree all week. The children and Mrs. Crosby, they make all their own ornaments out of styro-foam and all kinds of decorative things, and we'll have a big tree. We'll get up early in the morning and go to church, of course, and then come back and open all the presents and then we'll look at the tele', there'll be a big championship football game on - we'll all have to see that!

SHAW: Oh great, it sounds absolutely splendid. Is the place looking beautiful?

BING: Oh yes, well we're very proud of the decorating scheme this season. I think Mrs. Crosby and the children have really achieved a new pinnacle.

SHAW: We've been watching you on television this morning over here in your film, "White Christmas"....remember that, with Danny Kaye and Rosemary Clooney?

BING: I sure do, yes! It had some nice songs in it.

SHAW: You know, "White Christmas", it's still amongst the biggest sellers. When did you first record it....when was that, Bing?

BING: Well, it was in a picture called "Holiday Inn", which was early 1940-44 I guess, and then it was recorded about the same time for the phonograph.

SHAW: Did you recognise it as being the big hit it's turned out to be?

BING: Ah no, I had no idea - I had no idea....it was just a song that was kind of added at the end because we had a little scene that needed a song and Mr. Berlin put this song together for us. It didn't have any production or anything. I was just seated at a piano, singing alone, a girl had dumped me, ditched me, and I was just seated alone at this piano singing very nostalgically.

SHAW: We were chatting a little earlier to your old mate, Bob Hope.

BING: Yea.

SHAW: Out in Bangcock. He's been out entertaining the troops in Vietnam. What's your reaction to this news of his that he's been offering four million pounds to swop prisoners of war out there?

BING: Well, I'm sure it's something he's had in mind for a long time and he took advantage of the opportunity of being this close to Laos and a chance to get into a conversation, a dialogue, with the North Vietnam Ambassador at Laos. I know it's a project that's very dear to his heart. He'd like to accomplish something on behalf of these fellers who have been in prison for so many years there, and there hasn't been any progress made in liberating them.

SHAW: Do you see much of Bob these days, Bing, because we haven't seen a Road-To film for a long while now?

BING: No, we haven't. We're getting a little old for that!

SHAW: (laughing) You're never too old for that!

BING: We keep up with a couple of young gals!

SHAW: Well, could we ask you to send a message to the folks over here. Would you like to send a message to them?

BING: Oh, I'd be delighted! I'm elated at an opportunity to speak on BBC. I'm grateful to you to have an opportunity to say hello and to wish all my friends over there, particularly the people at the Staffords Hotel in St.James's Place. I want to wish them all a very Happy New Year and a Blessed and Holy Christmas. I hope the weather is good and I hope to get back there very early in the Spring for some golf and some horse racing, and to see some of my old friends again.

SHAW: Bing, we'll look forward to that and thank you very much for talking to us.

BING: Thank you for the call. Bye!

SHAW: Bye.

(Exit with "White Christmas" fading in).

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(EDITOR's comment: The above interview was kindly sent in by Richard Muirhead)

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L.P. RELEASES IN AMERICA AND SPAIN

"Show Biz" is a new L.P. from RCA-Victor in the States, and consists of a 'montage' of many original recordings covering the entire show-business scene from 1904 to the present day....or "From Vaude to Video" as it says on the sleeve! The record, expertly narrated by Georgie Jessel, is based upon the book of the same name, written by Abel Green and Joe Laurie, Jnr. About 30 seconds of Bing's 1931 recording of "Just A Gigolo" is featured on the second side. Members wanting this disc may try writing to Harlequin Record Shop, 119 New Bond Street, London, W.1., although success cannot be guaranteed. The number is LOC-1011.

And now for two Spanish releases....information supplied by courtesy of Ken Crossland. The first is a re-issue on Coral of the original Brunswick album "In A Little Spanish Town". The price is 190 pts. (about £1.15). The second is an album entitled "Voces Y Sonidos De Oro", Volume 20, on the MCA label, number 21.347. Priced at 215 pts. (about £1.25). The series contains all the Decca stars, and Bing is number 20. The L.P. consists of

the following tracks:

"Where The Blue Of The Night"
"Moonlight Becomes You"
"Sweet Leilani"
"The One Rose"
"It's Easy To Remember"
"June In January"
"I'm An Old Cowhand"
"McNamara's Band"
"Don't Fence Me In"
"You Are My Sunshine"
"Pennies From Heaven"
"It's Been A Long, Long Time"

Both Spanish issues carry a large, recent photograph of Bing on the sleeves.

WANTED Information leading to the acquisition of the soundtrack L.P. "NIGHT OF THE GENERALS"

Please write to Mr. Lee Argent, c/o the ICC at the Editor's address.

Our regular contributors, JIM HAYES and MICHAEL CRAMPTON will be back with us in the May edition of "BING". At the time of 'going to press', their articles had not arrived at the Editorial office.

TAPED CROSBYANA

Strict legal copyright clauses appertain to private tapings for obvious reasons. Certain taping facilities involving non-commercial material may be available to ICC members without offence to anyone. Publicity Officer, BOB ROBERTS, 56 Thorold Road, Chatham, Kent, is an expert in this field, and his advice is available to any member. Please enclose a SAE for a prompt reply.

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(Please mention "BING" when writing!)

A few copies of the ICC's "MINI-DISCOGRAPHY" are still available from the Secretary, price 50p, post free. Send P.O. or cheque to Reg Bristo, 7 Greenmeadow Close, Cwmbran, Monmouthshire, NP4 3NR, to receive your copy by return post.

BING

a critique by
BERT BISHOP

The first glimpse of Bing on the 'box' for this quarter came just about the same time as the previous issue of "BING" was being duplicated, Saturday, 30th October, at 7 p.m. Indeed, it was only a glimpse as this was an un-billed gag spot by him in the film "THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH" - or if you prefer it - Cecil B. DeMille visits the circus! Cornel Wilde, Betty Hutton, Charlton Heston, Dorothy Lamour, Gloria Grahame and James Stewart filled the starring roles in this 1953 ITV featured film.

In the relevant sequence, Dottie Lamour appears in a Hawaiian costume spectacular, whilst in the centre ring a trapeze act swings and sways to the music of the rather pretty song, "Lovely Luawana Lady", that Dottie stylishly sings. Between her two choruses the camera pans along the audience, where we see Bing and Bob Hope sitting together abstractedly munching popcorn as they gaze at the glamour and excitement of the 'big top'. A three second appearance? Certainly no more; and since I sat through, and taped, this two and a half hours of film just for that glimpse, I guess that the diminutive of 'fanatic' certainly applies in my case!

For those who have been following Frank Muir's programme, "SOUND OF LAUGHTER", the final Bing-featured clip from the 1931 Mack Sennett two-reelers, proved to be the best (in this reviewer's opinion) - namely, "BLUE OF THE NIGHT". In the event, we were treated to approximately the final third running-time - seven minutes - of a film in which Bing plays himself, at that time the well-known nightclub and radio crooner.

In this extract, Franklin Pangborn, again playing the aggrieved and self-assumed fiancee of Bing's girl friend ('Babe' Kane), rashly bets his new Cadillac Roadster to five bucks that Bing is not who he finally claims to be. For up this point in the story Bing had been posing as a reporter, even fooling his girl. Since he is carrying no documentary identification, he is requested to sing in order to establish his true identity, win the bet and the girl. Happily, the song he chooses is his now famous signature tune: "....and put those whistles in", demands the 'stake holder'. "That's him all right", he adds, with a chuckle, handing over the car keys to Bing as he inimitably croons 'Old Blue'.

Thus, in an idyllic Hollywood ending, Bing and his girl drive off in the sporty Roadster as the final frames dissolve from the screen to the fading notes of "....someone waits for me". What more could you wish?

This final programme in the series was screened Friday, 3rd December, at 8.30 p.m.

Could it be Christmas without Crosby? We like to think not; and although in this respect Bing was notably absent from the small screen in 1970, BBC-1 did relent for the 1971 Yuletide season by presenting Paramount's first film in 'VistaVision' - "WHITE CHRISTMAS". Not its first showing on this medium, and almost apologetically presented at the curious time of 10.30 a.m. on Christmas Eve. Certainly appropriate within the context of the story of this 1954 film, as most of the action takes place in the ten days preceding Christmas Day. But I fear that most potential viewers would have been otherwise occupied in last minute preparations rather than having the necessary two hours to spare at this incongruous time. I'm sure that most readers will be well acquainted with

this Irving Berlin song-packed picture, but a resumé of parts of the story might not come amiss.

The prologue to the main plot is set in an advanced battle area in France towards the end of the Second World War. It is Christmas Eve, and part of a Division of American soldiers are gathered at a troop concert intently watching and listening as, against a jagged backdrop of a battle-scarred shell of a crumbling building, Capt. Bob Wallace (Bing) almost reverently sings "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas...."; his only accompaniment, a tinkling musical box; all else is silent except for the occasional and insidious roar of distant cannon. Meanwhile the Division's affectionately respected commanding officer, General Waverly (Dean Jagger), who has just been replaced by a seemingly intolerant barrack-square type successor, has quitely mingled among his men and sits unnoticed, gazing at the, by now, moist eyed G.I.'s, heads bent, each in his own private reverie. (The author of "The Irving Berlin Sonography" states: "They're weeping because they came to the show expecting Jolson!" but we will ignore that comment.)

An unabashed pause follows the closing chorus; broken when Capt. Wallace announces the General's departure with a brief but eulogical speech. This is hastily interrupted by General Waverly coming 'on stage' and 'slamming' the Division in general for their sloppy ways, and the show's producer, Phillip Davis, Private 1st. Class (Danny Kaye), in particular, for putting on the concert. His adopted disciplinarianist attitude rapidly mellows as he attempts to convey his thanks to the men for their co-operation during his command. Groping for words, and affectedly embarrassed, he turns to Capt. Wallace and says in an aside, "Don't just stand there, how do I get off?" "Just happen to have a slam-bang finish, sir" is the chuckled reply. With that, the entire stage company, troops and all, rousingly sing, "We'll follow the old man wherever he wants to go....", subsiding to an unwavering sotto voce rendition for the centre chorus as an attacking enemy aircraft zooms low overhead.

It is during this air-raid that Private Phil Davis snatches Capt. Bob Wallace from certain death beneath a crashing wall, Phil breaking his own arm in the process. Bob, who is a professional entertainer in civilian life, later visits Phil in the camp sick-bay to express his thanks, and perhaps rather foolishly adds, "Anytime, anyplace I can do anything for you, you just pick up a 'phone, huh." Phil suggests that he could do him a favour by putting across a song he has written when the hostilities have ceased. Bob looks at it: "This is a duet, I work solo", he points out. But Phil, fancying himself as a suitable partner for Bob as a night-club entertainer, proposes they work together as he dramatically clutches his wounded arm and gazes, with all the pathos he can muster, at Bob. Faced with such a performance, and having virtually just committed himself, Bob is obliged to concede, and thus the double-act of 'Wallace and Davis' is born.

I have deliberately elaborated upon this opening sequence, for it sets the tone for the entire film: uncompromisingly sentimental; wistfully naive, and interlaced with contrived but acceptable scenes of love and laughter, disenchantment and pathos, all colourfully embracing a varied selection of Irving Berlin songs, both old and new.

To continue then: 'Wallace and Davis' become a successful nightclub song and dance act, eventually top-billing their part-owned theatrical company. Bob is the driving force, ambitiously embroiled in his vocation to the exclusion of all else, whilst Phil, who has an eye for the girls, would be more than happy to ease up a little in order to have some time to himself, occasionally. Such is the substance of a friendly argument that eventually ensues after Phil tries to get Bob married off to a succession of show girls.

At this point in the story, 'The Haines Sisters', Betty and Judy (Rosemary Clooney and Vera-Ellen), appear on the scene when Bob and Phil go along to 'catch their act'. After the girls performance of the song, "Sisters", they have to make a hasty backstage exit - landlord trouble -

leaving Bob and Phil to cover their escape by miming to a recording of the "Sisters" song routine; an hilarious scene that genuinely seems to break Bing up towards the finish.

During a train journey up to Vermont - the first of several plots by Phil to bring Bob and Betty together - the foursome blend their voices in what is, to me, the most musically refreshing song sequence of the film: "Snow".

Arriving at Pine Trees, Vermont, the famous New England winter playground, they discover that not only is there no snow but also that the 'Columbia' guest house at which the girls are booked as an act, is owned and run by the now retired, General Waverly, who as a result of the weather situation is having a bad time financially. To help out, Bob arranges for his cast to come to the guest house to rehearse over the holiday period, hoping it will bring in some trade, and naturally providing plenty of scope for the interpolation of several song and dance routines. Meanwhile, romance is in the air, with Phil and Judy playing cupid, even getting engaged themselves as part of their schemes to bring Bob and Betty together. Time out for Bob to croon "Count Your Blessings Instead Of Sheep" to Betty, and Phil doing the honours with "The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing" to his fiancee.

After the obligatory 'boy loses girl as a result of a misunderstanding' screenplay ploy, in this case Betty suspecting Bob of exploiting the General's unfortunate circumstances by making a T.V. 'tearjerker' production of his show, they finally come together again during a gloriously theatrical finale which begins with the arrival, in uniform, of many members of General Waverly's old 151st. Division at his guest house as a result of a television appeal, during which he sings "What Can You Do With A General", by Bob. All of which is kept a secret from the General until he descends for the Christmas Eve floor-show, also dressed in uniform - all his 'civvy' suits having been cunningly sent to the cleaners - and is greeted, in a highly emotionally charged scene, to a reprise of "We'll Follow The Old Man".

But that isn't the end, for the producer, Michael Curtiz, just happens to have a slam-bang finish. Sure enough it begins to snow, and opening up the back of the stage so that all might see the "tree tops glisten", the company stage a spectacular production built around the song, "White Christmas", with Bob playing Santa Claus as he sings with the rest of the cast. Inside the sack he finds a present to himself from Betty; it is a model of a 'shining knight on a white charger', which is her way of expressing her love and faith in him after her previous unjust suspicions.

So with the two couples happily paired, and the General surrounded by snow, and therefore happily solvent, all the loose ends have been neatly tied in this Christmas film package, the like of which, one can truly say, "they don't make them like that any more".

(Other songs featured, either in part or as a full production number, not mentioned in the foregoing, are: "Choreography", sung and danced by Danny Kaye; "Gee, I Wish I Was Back In The Army", sung by Bing and Danny Kaye, and by Rosemary Clooney and Vera-Ellen; "Love, You Didn't Do Right By Me", sung by Rosemary Clooney; "Heat Wave", "Let Me Sing And I'm Happy", "Blue Skies" and "Mandy", sung by Bing and Danny Kaye, and chorus.)

Let's start the New Year right - "LET'S MAKE LOVE": the New Year's Day Saturday afternoon alternative for non-sport lovers on BBC-2 at 2 p.m. A 1960 film starring Marilyn Monroe and Yves Montand, featuring Frankie Vaughan and Tony Randall lurking in the wings and three special guest stars, one of whom, as you so rightly guessed, was Bing.

This was a very light-weight romantic comedy in which Yves Montand plays a multi-millionaire business tycoon who wants to learn a little more

than the normal social graces in order to woo Miss Monroe away from Frankie Vaughan - if only he had told her about his money he needn't have bothered! As it is, he has Milton Berle attempt to teach him how to be a humorous raconteur, but with scant success. Montand then suggests he might do better learning to sing. Berle is inclined to agree: "You want another teacher? I'll call one. The guy I have in mind is the greatest".

Bing, playing himself, arrives at Montand's appartment. In a 2½ minute sequence he runs through the song "Incurably Romantic" with his pupil, who appears to be tone deaf and is pausing in all the wrong places. "The breath!" he gasps. "Oh, well, you and I know you're out of breath, but she'll think it's very sexy you see!" retorts Bing. Montand throws in a few 'boo-boo-boos', but Bing hastily warns him off, and seeing he is getting nowhere fast, adds, "Save your voice. Gee! I hope you kiss better than you can sing or you're out of business. Now if we could get you to move a little -dance, d'ya dance?" A dejected "No" from Montand. "Wait a minute, I think I can swing it for you". Bing picks up the 'phone, "If I can catch this boy for you, you're a cinch".

In the very next scene, Montand is falling over himself as Gene Kelly tries to teach him some tricky terpsichory! All together, some five minutes of quite acceptable viewing, but as far as I'm concerned they could have left the remaining 105 minutes on the cutting-room floor.

Same armchair, same channel, some nine hours later, 11.15 p.m. to be precise; and had you been similarly tuned in you would have been watching "FILM NIGHT'S THIRD ANNIVERSARY". A clip from a previous Danny Kaye interview was shown which included the Bing and Danny "Sisters" mime routine from the film "WHITE CHRISTMAS". An unexpected bonus in a programme strictly for film addicts and dedicated reviewers!

On the last page of "Radio Times", 8th.-14th. January, there appeared in the "Next Week" column the headline, 'Bing: exclusive interview'. This was accompanied by a black and white 1961 photograph of Bing alongside a short paragraph promising a colour feature. Sure enough in the 15th.-21st. January edition, pages 6 and 7 were devoted to a delightfully surprising write-up and a full-page 1937 studio colour portrait of Bing, avec pipe, looking comfortably relaxed despite the usually stilted effect these posed publicity photographs engender in the subject. Inset in the top left-hand corner was an extended colour version of the aforementioned 1961 photo'. The text concerned itself with his current attitudes to work and leisure activities - attitudes that seemed to have changed not one wit throughout his career!

This exclusive interview was used to promote BBC-2's new series of Saturday afternoon (2 p.m.) Hollywood musicals, commencing with Bing's 1959 film "SAY ONE FOR ME". For the third time in his screen career, Bing donned a 'dog-collar', in this instance to play the part of Father Conroy whose parish is situated in a theatrical district of New York. Unfortunately this film does not stand comparison with his Father O'Malley roles in "GOING MY WAY" and "THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S". After a very promising start with Bing and Debbie Reynolds singing the title tune over the credits, the film continued with a plot that barely raised itself above 'dime novel' rating.

Briefly, the story concerned a high-school graduate with theatrical background, Holly LaMaise (Debbie Reynolds), and her developing love for a brash producer/entertainer named Tony Vincent (Robert Wagner). Also concerned was Father Conroy, requested to look out for Holly by her ailing father, who firmly but unavailingly attempted to dissuade Holly's association with the self-opinionated womanising Tony. An out-of-character reformation by Tony, in the last reel, gave Father Conroy the opportunity to sing "The Secret Of Christmas" (one of the most moving Christmas songs

that Bing has recorded), and his blessing to Holly and Tony's union.

Between times, the film fluctuated considerably - elevated in every scene that Ray Walston appeared - a veteran scene stealer who here, portrayed an alcoholic pianist and erstwhile composer of popular songs. Father Conroy 'saved' him too, after imploring with him: "Stop bending your elbow and start bending your knee". A touching scene, with both actors handling their dialogue with competent conviction. Bing's third song, "I Couldn't Care Less", was also in accompaniment with Ray Walston, as Phil Stanley, on piano.

None of the four other featured songs or song and dance routines are really worthy of mention, except to say that they constituted the film's least endearing sequences; plunging to its absolute nadir with the number, "The Night Rock And Roll Died - Almost", sung by Judy Harriet. All credit to Robert Wagner, I suppose, an unusual role for him which he acted well enough to have put me off him for life had I not previously, and since, seen him in more interesting or sympathetic roles. The film did nothing for Debbie Reynolds, who, frankly, did very little for the film come to that. Bing slipped into his, by now, well-worn vestments - with accustomed ease, played his priest role in a more subdued vein than previously, and at the same time gave us one more memorably seasonal tune. But one felt though that all three stars were deserving of a much better screen-play than this film provided.

It was with mixed feelings that I tuned in to ITV at 7 p.m. on Thursday, 20th January. At last the long awaited London area screening of "HIGH SOCIETY" was about to become a reality. But, knowing this channel of old, how much of the film would be mutilated? What songs would by the wayside fall to the great god, 'commercial break'? Typewriter and paper stood at the ready - all was set to launch a castigating letter of condemnation to the perpetrators of any pernicious pruning! Happily, my fears were confounded, and consequently my apologies and thanks are due to Channel 23. For by the time 'Pops' Armstrong had proclaimed "End of story!" some two hours later - including advertising time - it was enjoyably evident that none of the songs had been omitted and that precious little, if any, of the dialogue had been deleted. A subsequent check revealed possibly only a couple of minutes missing from the correct 107 minutes running time.

This picture was spawned from a play by Philip Barry called "THE PHILADELPHIA STORY", which scored a noteworthy success as a Broadway stage production in the 1930's. Inevitably, a film followed, since described as 'a classic comedy of manners'. It must have indeed been a very exceptional film, since every comparative review with "HIGH SOCIETY" that I have read, has rated the later musical version very poorly: 'forget the miserable musical version released in 1956 and you'll adore this splendidly acted comedy....'; 'HIGH SOCIETY....lacks the sparkle of the original'; '....a tasteless violation of everything that Philip Barry intended'; Here we have three examples from different sources which one cannot lightly dismiss as critics' gripes, especially in view of the strong line up of talent involved. Bearing in mind the tremendous popularity of "HIGH SOCIETY" with the general public (a million seller record for Bing and Grace Kelly with "True Love"), it might be worth-while comparing the casts of the two films, and the other relevant factors, to see if these caustic comments are justified, and why each film was a box-office success. In juxtoposition are the stars who played the equivalent roles.

a) "THE PHILADELPHIA STORY" 1940	b) "HIGH SOCIETY" 1956
Cary Grant	Bing Crosby
James Stewart	Frank Sinatra
Katharine Hepburn	Grace Kelly
Ruth Hussey	Celeste Holm
John Howard	John Lund

One is bound to admit that a) has a very formidable line-up of

acting talent, and in my opinion - Celeste Holm and John Lund excepted - has the edge in that department. Combined with what must have been a very good screen-play; probably near original dialogue; it is clear that it is a very strong contender in the popularity stakes.

Let's see then what b) has going for it. Once having accepted that it is a musical remake of a very successful play and film - an anathema to some people - one need only mention that the music and lyrics were written by that sophisticated and erstwhile dilettante composer, Cole Porter, and the implication is that the songs must surely have suited the socialite aspect of the story. Then again, what contemporary singers had the vocal talents and sufficient acting ability to fill the two main male roles? None other than the two most popular singers of our time! Added to which, if there was going to be a jazz festival interpolated within the story, who better to invite than Louis Armstrong and His All-Stars? I'd like to add here that we have a pretty cool Grace running a very close second to that grande dame, Katy.

If, therefore, film b) has any weakness at all it can only be found in the screen-play. I confess that, personally, I found this to be true. The dialogue lacked the sparkle and wit necessary to a film of this genre. Celeste Holm, for example, has had far superior dialogue and gems of repartee in lesser films, than John Patrick wrote for her in this script. From this, I conclude that the extremely high entertainment value of "HIGH SOCIETY" lies entirely in its musical content, put over by the 'tops' in the business, plus the strong supporting cast who were able, by their presence, to carry a script that is somewhat less than the film merits.

The story then: Louis Armstrong and His All-Stars, playing themselves, sing their film-plot "Calypso" as they arrive by coach at the lush, Rhode Island home of C. K. Dexter Haven (Bing) who is promoting a jazz festival. Dexter's home is next door to that of the Lord family, whose eldest daughter, Tracy Samantha (Grace Kelly), divorced from a brief marriage to Dexter because of his flippant attitudes, is to marry the rather stuffy George Kittredge (John Lund) the following morning. Dexter and the Lord family in general are still friends, and drifts in and out of their grand residence hopefully trying to scotch the wedding merely by his presence. Tracy's young sister, Caroline (Lydia Reed), hopes so too. She likes Dex, and hangs around him in schoolgirl adoration, which receives a boost when Dex composes, off the cuff, and sings "Little One" to her. Louis picks up the tune and blows sweet, adding, "Right song, wrong girl!"

Meanwhile, the Editor of "Spy" magazine has threatened an exposé of a dalliance by Tracy's father, Seth Lord (Sidney Blackmer), unless his magazine can cover the wedding. Consequently, Mike Connor (Frank Sinatra) and Liz Imbrie (Celeste Holm), as reporter and photographer, arrive on the scene. Being way down the social scale they are bemused by their acceptance, unaware of the blackmail plot instigated by their Editor. First Caroline and then Tracy increase their unwanted visitors' bewilderment by affecting a gushing naivety, until Mike and Liz begin to suspect that they are being taken for a ride. They do an interview and take some photo's, in which Dex manages to steal most of the action alongside an unsmiling George, but Tracy quickly nips in the bud the ex-husband angle by 'accidentally' breaking Liz's camera, thus ruining the film! Mike and Liz wander off to view the wedding presents, where they sing their classic duet, "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire", whilst browsing among the galaxy of gifts.

Tracy is lounging wistfully by their swimming pool when Dex ambles over bringing <u>his</u> gift. It is a model of the yacht, 'True Love', on which he and Sam, as he calls Tracy, spent their honeymoon two years ago. He also gives her some good advice, as it appears that she is too much of a perfectionist where people are concerned, which resulted in their break-up and her disenchantment with her father over <u>his</u> mild affair. Dex leaves her in thought and her daydreams, as the model yacht sails across the pool. She sees it as the real 'True Love', and recalls, in a flash-back, contented hours spent drifting "sun-tanned, wind-blown, honeymooners at last

alone", - they go into their song, with Dex coaxing the tune from his concertina with consumate ease. But soon George wanders up to the pool and breaks her reverie. "You belong up on a pedestal" he tells her.

Later, Tracy drives Mike along to her Uncle Willie's (Louis Calhern) residence, shortly to be closed up because of crippling taxation. There will be one more glorious gathering, Tracy's 'bachelor' party that evening. Whilst Mike explores her mind he becomes captivated by her cool, graceful charm and beauty, which sentiment he conveys to her with his own inimitable interpretation of "You're Sensational". From here, the scene changes immediately to Dexter's home where is getting dressed for the party, a mixed affair. He too is still in love with his 'Sam' and as he adds the finishing touches and dons his dinner jacket he abstractedly, in her absence, serenades her with that beautiful ballad, "I Love You, Samantha". Once again, the house is filled with the master's voice accompanied by the oh so tuneful tones echoing from Satchmo's trumpet.

The party turns out to be a real swinging affair, with Mike and Tracy, especially, imbiding the 'bubbly' to slight excess. Uncle Willie settles his guests and announces the arrival of "er, a Mr. Lewis Armstrong" come to entertain. He leaves it to Dex to introduce the delectable musical item that is to follow. "Dear gentle folk of Newport, or maybe I should say hats and cats! I want you to lend an ear because I want you to hear some really shimmering sharps and flats..." As he 'talks', the members of the band make their way on to the stage. Dex continues, his voice musically pregnant. "For these cosy virtuosi, just about the greatest in the trade, are fixing to show you now, precisely how - or approximately, jazz music is made". Then comes the terrifically telling spark-off line, "Well you take some skin", that lights the ascending fuse in a jazz vocal and duet with Louis that rhythmically burns its way to its climatic and explosive finish, "And that's jazz!" The number is, of course, "Now You Has Jazz", and within its kin they come no better.

George decides that Tracy has had enough champagne when she starts twirling around singing "I'm Sensational", and escorts her to her room where he insists that she remain to sober up. In the meantime, Mike has wandered into the vast library where he knows that Uncle Willie keeps a secret bar. Dex is in there, reading. He accepts the invitation to join the slightly inebriated Mike in another drink. Mike begins to gossip: "I have heard among this clan, you are called the forgotten man". Dex replies, "Is that what they're saying? Well Did You Evah!" Thus, the song that paired Bing and Frank for the first time on screen or record was born. Great lyric, perfect timing, and each balancing the other in perfect counter-attraction. Very nicely backed by Johnny Green and the M.G.M. Studio Orchestra, too.

In the next scene we see Tracy climbing out of her window. She encounters Mike. "Let's go 'over the wall'", he suggests. Into the star-lit garden they wander, each succumbing to the heady effects of the wine and the moon in a romantic euphoria. Mike sings "Mind If I Make Love To You" as they dance together around the patio to the pool. George, meanwhile, has discovered Tracy's absence, and when she eventually turns up, dripping wet, in the arms of an equally soggy Mike after a 'midnight swim' (were they pushed, or did they fall?), poor George nearly has an apoplectic fit. Dex slugs Mike on the chin, telling him when he comes round, "Thought I'd better hit you before he did, he's in much better shape than I am!"

Next morning dawns bright and sunny, in direct contrast to the physical (and in a couple of cases, mental) hangovers of the principal characters. Tracy in particular is well aware that she has now slipped from her pedestal, especially as she is unable to remember exactly what occured between herself and Mike. George is pacing up and down uttering pompous accusations until Mike reassures both of them that the whole innocuous event consisted of "two kisses and one late swim". This rather knocks the wind out of George's sails and he simmers down somewhat reluctantly.

"What's done, is done. We can't turn back the clock", he says.

"Boy, I wish I'd have said that!" adds Dex, in a heavily sarcastic aside. At which point Tracy decides that George is too good for her, now that she's slipped a little, thus showing the human frailty that Dex had always reminded her was inherent in all people. George departs in a huff, for good.

Panic stations! Suddenly they hear the wedding march from within the house where all the guests are gathered. Tracy opens the entrance to the aisle and begins to explain that there has been a slight hitch in the proceedings, but prompted by Dex she goes on to say that they should remain seated as the wedding will proceed as originally planned two years ago, when she and Dex eloped. Mike lends Dex his tie, and all is set for a re-marriage. Mike and Liz announce their resignation from "Spy" magazine and give their pictures and write-up to Tracy as a wedding present. Just to round off a completely happy ending, Mike proposes to Liz, saying, "We'll develop this later!" The strains of Lohengrin's famous march begin again as outside, Louis and His All-Stars take up the tune and give it their own, very special treatment.

"End of story!"

Despite the critics, and my own criticism of the screen-play, I enjoyed every minute of it....as the man said - "positively therapeutic!"

Just one final paragraph to say that according to an article in the "TV TIMES", Jess Yates, the producer of "STARS ON SUNDAY", says he has his spies out looking for Bing at all the 'classic' races in the hopes of catching him for the programme. (He should turn his attention to the golf courses!) In view of the uncertainty surrounding this quasi-religious programme as reported recently in the national press, we shall be very lucky indeed if the Maestro does get to make an appearance in this programme. Nevertheless, you fellas who haunt Gleneagles, Wentworth and the like in the hope of seeing Bing when he comes over, don't forget to whistle up Mr. Yates - we could all be in for a pleasant surprise!

BERT BISHOP

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(EDITOR's comments: As I was typing Bert's synopsis of "High Society", I managed to hear "Well, Did You Evah?" played on "FAMILY FAVOURITES", Sunday 6th February! In a letter accompanying his article, Bert wrote: "Herewith, "BING ON THE BOX" - I hope it doesn't stretch your endurance". Well, Bert....after 7½ pages and many swear words later, I think you should be awarded the title of "Critic Of The Year".....your efforts are no mean feat and I'm sure that the success of "BING" owes a lot to your fine contributions.)

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I N T H E N E X T I S S U E....we hope to include a sales list of rare Bing Crosby 78's from the collection of ICC member, Johnny Joyce. By the time our May issue of "BING" thuds onto your doormats, it is hoped that the "A TO Z" publication will be in everybody's hands, and it will be evident that it was worth waiting for! Did YOU order a copy?

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****
* WHATEVER HAPPENED TO....? *
****

(From the scrapbook)...."Good news for practically everybody is the announcement that Bing and Bob are shortly to make another "ROAD" film. This time it is the "Road To Paris". It will be the sixth of the series, but as yet there is no suggestion that Dorothy Lamour will join her old partners."

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S T O P P R E S S I've just been informed that the album "A CHRISTMAS SING WITH BING" was re-issued on MCA in December, selling at 75p each.

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FREE ADVERTISING

FREE ADVERTISING for members wishing to
B U Y S E L L or E X C H A N G E

O F F E R S I N V I T E D
Richard Muirhead, 172 Colinton Mains Drive, Edinburgh, Scotland, EH13 9BW, has one copy of "Bing And Other Things" by Kathryn Crosby, in NEW, MINT condition. Any offers?

W A N T E D
Norman Toogood, 91 Chiltern Green, Millbrook Estate, Southampton, SO1 4BB, will pay any reasonable price for an excellent copy of the Ace Of Hearts L.P. "Bing Sings For Children".

T R A D E
Larry F. Kiner, 7554 132nd Avenue N.E., Kirkland, Washington, 98033, U.S.A., is prepared to trade taped copies of Bing's radio and T.V. shows for records (78/45/LP, etc.) that he needs. List of tape "wants" will be welcomed from members, together with details of records which they have for disposal.

O F F E R S I N V I T E D
The Advertiser, 146 Kingsland Road, Plaistow, London, E.13, has the following MINT condition records for auction: "Three Billion Millionaires" United Artists UXL-4, and "John McCormack In Opera And Song" Asco A-110 (2 L.P. set).

F O R S A L E
House your Crosby 78's in first-class stiff cardboard record covers. Brown cardboard with brown binding.
10" size - up to 100: 3p each. Per 100: £2.45 Per 1,000: £22.50
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Postage extra, except in the case of 1,000 quantities which can be sent carriage free (Inland only). Free sample sent anywhere on request. From: John Gunn, 15 Lynton Road, Hadleigh, Benfleet, Essex. (Please mention "BING" magazine when writing).

W A N T E D
Someone, somewhere MUST have a copy of Bing's "Oh Tell Me Why" for sale!! The best price paid for an excellent copy of this disc!! Write to the Editor.

W A N T E D
Always interested in your Crosby record disposals - particularly any 45-singles, E.P.'s and 10" L.P.'s (UK or USA issues). Your prices paid for discs in excellent condition. All letters answered. Write to the Editor.

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360 pages, over 130 photographs, and thousands of facts!

A few remaining copies of this superb book are still available from the English Representative of the Al Jolson Society: Barrie Anderton, 14 Richmond Wood Road, Bournemouth, Hants., England. Please write for full details.

THE SUCCESSORS

by KEITH PARKINSON

In the summer of 1969 the BBC broadcast a series of programmes on Radio-3 which dealt with the recent developments in popular music. The first programme of the series started with the Crosby rendition of "White Christmas" which apparently typified the type of popular music acceptable to the public until 1950, the year chosen as that in which the review of pop would begin.

1950 may also be taken as a significant year in which the Crosby career began to wane as far as record sales were concerned. For 20 years Bing had been a leader in the field of record hits; an era during which he was supreme although his popularity was challenged on the odd occasion. The only serious bid as far as a rival to Bing's record supremacy was concerned came from Frank Sinatra, but his career was in the doldrums in 1950 and in the 'forties his following had not equalled that of Bing. For a man to reign supreme in the popular music field for 20 years is no mean feat, and it may be safe to assume that Bing's public at the end of the 1940's was composed of his original followers plus fans who had joined other Crosby appreciators during the two preceding decades. Because Bing led the pop music field throughout the 20 years until 1950 the type of song he chose to record also dictated the type of music that the record buying public would listen to.

Why, then, did 1950 figure as the year in which Bing's record selling career would begin to decline? If I was pressed for an answer I would say that the Stateside record buyers had recovered sufficiently from the Second World War to want to enter a new era of popular music which called for new singers to sing a new style of song. This can be coupled with the fact that youth was finding a new prosperity and if part of this wealth went to buy records then, as ever, youth wished to associate itself with entirely different idols than those of its elders. Now, if all this sounds a little serious, it is only to set the scene for 1950 and the wind of change which swept through a section of the American popular music industry, and resulted in singers and songs that monopolised the hit parade on both sides of the Atlantic until the mid-fifties and the advent of rock 'n' roll in 1955/56.

One man can claim to have been behind the sound of the early 'fifties. He was an arranger for Columbia records in the USA and was partly responsible for Frank Sinatra's disenchantment with Columbia records. His name was Mitch Miller and his philosophy was simple. He wanted to record songs and artistes with the sole intention of selling records and making money for himself, his company and his singers. He was very successful with the result that in the seven years from 1950 to 1956 inclusive, three Columbia artistes dominated the best-selling lists both here and in the USA. Miller's techniques were not suited to Sinatra's style and the fact that Sinatra would not co-operate with Miller said much for Sinatra's integrity, and resulted in peak musical years with Capitol records, the company with which he subsequently signed. Miller's three protégés in the Columbia stable were Frankie Laine, Johnnie Ray and Guy Mitchell. All were more or less finished as popular singers before the advent of the 1960's, but their record sales were unrivalled, whilst the distinct Mitch Miller arrangements guided their discs to the top of the best-sellers lists.

Compared with Crosby, all had youth on their side. They were also able to forge a musical image to suit public tastes, whereas Bing's recordings were restrained in comparison, and anyway, his public was still vast and consequently demanded that his style remained more or less unaltered. There was no need for Bing to attempt to compete against the newcomers anyway, because he had a radio and cinema following founded on his years as an entertainer, and Laine, Ray and Mitchell were not able to challenge this overall popularity. Perhaps a closer look at American Columbia's top sellers is called for here. In the UK, the discs were released by Columbia (EMI) until the formation of the Phillips label, which pressed US Columbia discs until the CBS label was started to enable US Columbia to handle their own UK distribution.

Of the trio, Frankie Laine came to fame first. He had a hit with "That's My Desire", a song recorded for Mercury and released in the UK on the Oriole label. Over here the disc caused little interest but in the States 2,000,000 copies were sold. Laine's hit earned him a guest appearance on Bing's "Philco Radio Time" programme. Laine's childhood training included him singing in a Chicago Church choir and at the age of 19 he won a singing contest at Chicago's Merry Garden Ballroom, which resulted in an eight month engagement. The year was 1932, but nobody took much notice for the next 14 years. He took odd jobs between singing engagements and used to resort to entering dance marathons as a means of raising spaghetti money. He was then billed as Lo Vecchio, his real name. A radio announcer suggested a change of name to Frank Laine, and eventually Frank was changed to Frankie to avoid confusion with Frances Laine. Mitch Miller guided him following the success of "That's My Desire" and the big voice 'holler' technique led to hits like "Jealousy", "Jezebel", "Cool Water", "Answer Me" and suchlike. As with Ray and Mitchell, Laine had no marked success in movies. Vehicles like "Bring Your Smile Along" are best forgotten. On the other hand, his recordings of songs for movies to be sung over the credits will be long remembered. "Blowing Wind", "Man Without A Star" and "Strange Lady In Town" spring to mind immediately, whilst his last record hit was "Rawhide", the theme song from the television series of the same name. Career-wise, he visited this country in 1952 to appear at the London Palladium. In 1954 he had a coast-to-coast CBS daily network programme and at the end of the 1950's he concentrated more on cabaret work as his popularity waned. His Columbia contract ended, his more recent work has been released in this country by EMI without attracting too much attention. In 1955 Laine's record sales exceeded 30,000,000 which put him second only to Bing as the world's biggest seller. The bulk of this figure was achieved by those of Laine's hits which are available on Hallmark HM 515, an aptly titled album called "The Best Of Frankie Laine", which includes numbers such as "That Lucky Old Sun", "Granada", "Your Cheatin' Heart", and one of his greatest interpretations, "High Noon".

Guy Mitchell's recording contract with Columbia was negotiated by his agent, Eddie Joy, in March of 1950. His first session for the label brought on an attack of nerves and Mitchell had to return at a later date when he sang to music on a pre-recorded orchestral accompaniment. It was not until he had his fifth disc release with "My Heart Cries For You", a 2,000,000 seller, that fame came his way. Perhaps the Mitch Miller chorus and French horn arrangements are more apparent on Mitchell's records than is the case with Laine and Ray. Born in 1928, he first entered show-business at the age of 11 when Warner Brothers signed him up for grooming as a child star. He became a regular broadcaster over Warner Brothers Hollywood radio station. Following war service in the US Navy he joined Carmen Cavallaro's band. Illness intervened and he quit Cavallaro. Immediately prior to signing a recording contract he was making demonstration discs for song-writers. For a short time he was married to beauty queen Jackie Loughery but the marriage was dissoled in 1954, the year in which Mitchell appeared in the Royal Variety Show. During the same visit he performed at the Glasgow Empire and was surprised to find his wife waiting for him one evening. Mitchell contends that she was to have set up home in the States awaiting his return and her failure to do this resulted in a divorce. On 25th September 1955 he was the first American artiste to be seen on commercial television in this country, when he topped the "Sunday Night At The London Palladium" bill. Throughout the 1950's he was constantly in the top thirty best sellers list. The 1956/57 hit "Singing The Blues" was an immense hit and as late as 1960 he was enjoying record chart success. His recording career with Mitch Miller resulted in hits like "Sparrow In The Treetop", "There's A Pawnshop On The Corner In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania", "She Wears Red Feathers" and "The Roving Kind", and all these numbers are included on the budget Hallmark album "The Best Of Guy Mitchell", HM 580. Mitchell's downfall was sudden. A couple of minor film appearances, the end of his Columbia contract, an appearance

at the Batley Variety Club in Yorkshire, an attempted comeback, and an album for Starday, a tour of the UK clubs when he consistently appeared on the stage drunk, a tour of Australia, and.....? For the last 12 months I have not seen his name mentioned in the national or musical press.

Johnnie Ray was born in Dallas, Oregon in 1927. He is a partially deaf, three-quarters Blackfoot Indian, his hearing suffering following a blanket tossing game when he was a child and making a deaf aid a necessary prop to his vocal impressionist impersonators in the mid-1950's - and there were many. He began as a singer in small bars although his main occupation was as a songwriter. "Little White Cloud That Cried" was one of his own hit compositions, although his version of "Cry", recorded late in 1951, provided the first of many hits for Columbia. "Cry" sold 3,000,000 copies and was coupled with "The Little White Cloud That Cried" on disc. Ray's first ambition was to break into films and he went to Hollywood at the age of 17 to find himself ignored. Years laterm his first film appearance in "There's No Business Like Show Business" resulted in a £25,000 bonus from 20th Century-Fox. Whilst in Hollywood he became a straight man to a comedian before trying his luck as a singer. Song plugger Bernie Lang saw his singing act and took an interest in Ray's compositions before becoming his manager. A Columbia contract was negotiated in April 1951, and hits like "Somebody Stole My Gal", "Such A Night" and "Glad Rag Doll" followed. Success in the States, Australia and this country continued towards the end of the 1950's with further hits like "Walking In The Rain" and "Yes Tonight Josephine". As with Mitchell, the following decade found a fickle public switching allegiance to new idols. Ray's popularity waned and he found himself back in the clubs where he had first started out some 15 years previously. A charge of soliciting did little to help his public image, and the last time I saw him he played a cop in an American 'B' picture made in about 1968.

In the final analysis, the question must be asked - what happened to Frankie Laine, Guy Mitchell and Johnnie Ray? In the 1950's their popularity on the best selling record scene eclipsed Bing's disc sales. Now, some 20 years later, whilst his "successors" are vague memories to most of us, "dad" catches the attention of the public 45 years after his recording debut with an album of Christmas songs. Pop stars come and go, but Bing Crosby looks as though he can ride another few musical phenomena before he finally bows out of the limelight.

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BING CROSBY AND HIS RECORD-BUYING PUBLIC

by EDWARD TOWLER

Who buys Bing Crosby records these days? - other than members of the ICC, of course. It is a question that has been posed in these pages at different times by a number of contributors, most recently, I seem to recall, by Reg Bristo.

I am reminded of this topic again by the remarks of Bas Thomson in the August 1971 issue of "BING". Mr. Thomson you will remember spotted two copies of "The Young Bing Crosby" album in the racks of a Woolworth's store. He had insufficient money on him at the time to purchase a copy, and when he returned to the store next day, they had both gone! A few months ago, I was browsing in the H.M.V. Shop in London's Oxford Street. In the section allocated to Bing Crosby there were about half a dozen copies of the Bing/Rosemary Clooney RCA album entitled "Rendezvous". I had not got the album at that time, but I deferred purchasing a copy because I had already spent a few pounds more than was prudent of me on other albums! But when I returned to the store with the intention of purchasing a copy exactly one week later, all the copies of the album had gone! And an enquiry to an assistant revealed that none was available from stock. Six copies of one Crosby album sold by one store in a week! If this was being repeated throughout the country, I reflected, then there must still be a big demand for Crosby records. I realise of course that these are two isolated instances, but they would seem to indicate that members of the general public, as distinct from Crosby collectors, do still buy Bing's records.

Yet record company executives continue to tell us that Crosby records do not enjoy large sales. If this is so, could it be that some of them contain the wrong type of material, or are marketed at an unattractive price? Of the two albums referred to, I think it is significant that "Rendezvous" is on a budget-priced label, and "The Young Bing Crosby" which attracted the attention of Mr. Thomson was, I assume, either a 'remainder' of the RCA-Victor album selling at a reduced price, or the recent reissue (less two tracks) on the cheaper priced RCA-Camden label. More significantly, both albums on the whole contain the kind of titles that appeal to a wider public than the dedicated collector - a consideration which I feel is sometimes overlooked by record producers when planning reissue albums. We have been told, for instance, by an executive of Epic Records (in a letter to a fellow collector that was reproduced in a recent issue of another magazine) that it is not proposed to issue Volume 2 of "The Bing Crosby Story" because of 'poor buyer response' to Volume 1.

But to what extent may the poor response be attributed to the selection of material on Volume 1, which was hardly of a nature to appeal to a wider record buying public that still associates Crosby with those classic ballads that made his name a household one in the 'thirties and 'forties? Whilst to the hard core of Crosby collectors the reissue of these historic recordings was a notable event which we all readily welcomed, I think it is indisputable that such titles as "Mississippi Mud", "Wa-Da-Da", "My Suppressed Desire", "The Spell Of The Blues", "Lawd, You Made The Night Too Long", "My Woman" and "St.Louis Blues" can have made little impact on the man in the street. Ironically enough, when one considers the period that would have been covered by a second volume and the material available to Epic, it is difficult to suppress the feeling that it would have outsold the first volume by a handsome margin! I am sure that the average record buyer would have been far more receptive to an album containing such delectable items as "Waltzing In A Dream", "Love Me Tonight", "Lazy Day", "Street Of Dreams", "Try A Little Tenderness", "I'm Playing With Fire" and "Shadow Waltz", which would presumably have all qualified for inclusion in the second volume. As though to prove my reasoning on this subject, I would be interested to learn how sales of the CBS "Bing Crosby In Hollywood" album, which contained a wealth of classic titles, compared with

Volume 1 of "The Bing Crosby Story"! It is, I feel, relevant that the two best selling albums amongst Bing's Ace Of Hearts issues have been the two volumes of "The Early 'Thirties". There is no need to stress that these contain the kind of titles that appeal to both the collector and the casual record buyer. They are perfect examples of the right type of material on an attractively priced label and which obviously have a good sales potential. It is surely not without significance too that nearly all of Bing's Ace Of Hearts albums have remained in the catalogue for something like five or six years without being deleted - and there are not many albums of any description of which that can be said nowadays. Perhaps Epic Records may yet have second thoughts about that second volume of "The Bing Crosby Story"!

It is of course extraordinary how demand for a record increases once it has been deleted. I notice, for instance, that Leslie Gaylor of all people has recently been advertising for copies of Bing's Music For Pleasure albums (which are in fact reissues of reissues!), although I would imagine that Mr. Gaylor does not want these for his own collection! It is surprising too to note the frequency with which collectors of late have been enquiring for copies of "Bing's Hollywood" series on Brunswick. One would have thought that every Crosby collector had these albums. Yet I do not have one of the 15 albums in my own collection, and I must admit that I now begin to wish that I had! Perhaps when they were all readily available they posed the same dilemma for other collectors as they did for me, for of the 12 tracks that were usually contained on each album, perhaps half a dozen (or more in some cases) were already possessed on 78's. It was a question therefore of whether it was an economic proposition to purchase the albums for virtually a handful or recordings. They were all marketed, remember, at the full price of something in the region of 38/- each. (EDITOR's comment: The total cost of the 15 albums came to £27.10/- ....I should know, I bought 'em in one go!). Had they been issued, however, on a cheaper priced label, I am confident that they would now all be in my collection. In the circumstances, there is, I feel, a strong case for their re-issue at this time. Whereas I was reluctant to pay the equivalent of 38/- for the satisfaction of adding perhaps four or five recordings to my collection, I would gladly pay 99 pence to be able to do so. Should these words come to the attention of Mr. Geoff Milne, perhaps he will give consideration to the reissue of this very attractive series on Decca's "Coral" label.

The relation between material and price is, I feel, an important one, and I venture to suggest that a budget-priced version of these albums would enjoy greater sales than the original issues. They all contain many of those classic titles that appeal equally to collectors and a wider public, and which the man in the street remembers with affection and will forever associate with Bing Crosby and his films. I, for one, would certainly welcome their re-issue - along, it would seem, with quite a lot of other collectors.

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F R O M T H E S C R A P B O O K

"In rainbow-coloured clothing, topped with a tassled knitted cap, Bing Crosby received an enthusiastic welcome from 2,000 people on the Eden Golf Course at St.Andrews yesterday as he played his first and only practice round for the Amateur Golf championship, in which he competed today. He was beaten in his first round match by 3 and 2."

Monday, May 22, 1950

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* "A BING CROSBY L.P.-OGRAPHY" *
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This will be the ICC's next publication, which will make its appearance after the "A TO Z" has been completed. The LP-OG will contain a comprehensive list covering the majority of Bing's L.P.'s issued between 1954 and 1971, together with overseas equivalents. Watch out for more details soon!

LOOKING BACK

by JOHN FLEMING

All members are invited to contribute to this series.

We have all in turn found great pleasure in following Bing's career, and while we all differ in our choice of records, we are agreed that he is the Number One. Some tunes become favourites because of circumstances, such as "Goodnight, Lovely Little Lady". I almost drove my young sister mad by singing that one! I used to treat my Mum in an Italian Ice Cream shop, but she always maintained that I only took her in because the man always played "The Singing Hills" when he saw me entering! Whilst in India, I used to play "Blue Shadows And White Gardenias" and "Ridin' Around In The Rain". I had that same gramophone in Burma, too. "Trade Winds" was another beautiful song which nobody could handle quite like Bing, and if ever a song deserved to be sung by him, it was surely that one.

I suppose there are many members who can return to the early thirties and see it as I did. Every family seemed to have six or seven kids, at least! Jobs were scarce....money even more so, yet the pubs were plentiful and always packed on a Friday and Saturday. Those were the nights when the Tally Man hopefully made his rounds, missing very few doors on our street anyway.

Buying records was out of the question in those days. It was all Mum could do to supply porridge (and what porridge! - you could turn the plate upside-down and it stayed there!); fried bread and one egg between two, to her ever-hungry family.

I left school at 13½ and got a job at the local lemonade factory, six days a week from 8.00 a.m. until such time as the driver of the lorry decided to call it a day....sometimes 7 o'clock at night. My Mum gave me 9d. pocket money, added 1/3d. to my total wages, and that (believe it or not) paid the weekly rent.

Soon after I was about 14½, I heard Bing and I've been listening to him ever since. One day I came home from work to find Mum crying, and I noticed a large envelope on the mantlepiece....so off I went to my medical in Edinburgh, dreading the thought of not being accepted. We must have been mad, really! Then followed an absence from home for six years, which included 3½ years in India and Burma. Bing, of course, was now established as No.1 on my list, and my ears soon pricked up at any opportunity to hear him.

Anyway, demob eventually arrived, and on returning to England I met the girl who was soon to become my wife, mother my four girls, and give me the happiest years a man could wish for....and is still doing so! Finding it hard to settle in Scotland due to housing shortage and lack of variety in jobs, we returned to England to try a new life, which for me meant I had to live with my Mother-in-Law....luckily she was a good 'un.

I got a job within three days, and I was there for 16 years. Just by chance, someone at work told me of a letter in the 'Daily Mirror' concerning Bing, and I soon let it be known that I was a collector. It was written by a Mr. Leslie Gaylor, so upon returning home that night I wrote to him and soon received a reply. He had been so impressed by my sincerity that he suggested I join the ICC and thus keep in touch with things. This naturally gave me great pleasure, and knowing of my life's ambition to meet Bing in person, he said he would help in any way he could to bring this about, being a personal friend of Bing. Well, Bing came to this country to make "The Road To Hong Kong" at Shepperton Studios, and I happened to remind Les of his promise. Sure enough, he supplied me with Bing's secretary's telephone number. I was too frightened to telephone in case I could not impress Miss Jilda Smith about how much I wanted to meet him, so I asked my wife to do it for me, being as she is so cool, calm and impressive.

Bing was very busy....so many people wanted his time, and what with magazines, the daily press, his golf, etc., leisure time was limited.

However, completely undaunted, my wife insisted, telling Miss Smith that I had waited so long, and at last she was told to 'phone back in a fortnight's time to confirm that Bing would be available. So, for a whole two weeks I sweated it out! I made arrangements for my wife to 'phone me at work and when I answered the 'phone it would be a "yes" or "no" straight away, so that I could be put out of misery one way or the other.

Came the 'phone call, and John with his heart pounding lifted the receiver to hear "Yes" - my legs were like jelly! Next day, in my Sunday best with my wife holding my arm, we presented ourselves at the Studio gates, and I received our pass to enter. We first visited Miss Smith to thank her personally. I thought that a sly wink passed between them! Bing's valet introduced us to Bing himself, who took me into his dressing room, and there I just sat and feasted my eyes upon the man who had given me so many years of pleasure!

He talked easily, showing me photographs of his family and asking me where I came from. He laughed heartily when I suggested "The Road To St.Andrews"! Finally, he sent for a photographer and readily agreed to be taken shaking hands. My heart was so full as I held that hand while the camera clicked. "Please God", I thought, "Let there be no mishap", and there wasn't, for in two days time I received the photographs and the negatives! I looked at that photo for hours, still unable to believe my good fortune, and even now I still feel so privileged to have sat with the greatest of them all....Bing Crosby.

Really, when you give it a bit of thought, a singer who can retain the affection and admiration of so many people for so many years, from teenage to middle-age....it's truly fantastic! We should be grateful to those such as yourself, Reg Bristo, Les Gaylor and many others who give up leisure time to provide us with a magazine for the sole purpose of discussing the one and only Bing.

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(EDITOR's comment: Many thanks indeed to John for a most sincere, heart-warming story. It was a pleasure to type it!)

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C R O S B Y - L E G E N D M A N

by LEE ARGENT

A few weeks ago, an acquaintance casually asked me, "What do you think of Bing Crosby?" I looked at my friend, a keen Crosby enthusiast, and gave him my honest opinion: "I don't really class myself as an expert in your field, I'm afraid, but I feel that if any show-business entertainer deserves to be called a living legend, then without a doubt it's Bing!"

But before I explain my statement, I implore you to bear with me, as I am not a Crosby collector. My knowledge of Crosby matters is nil in comparison with that of the readers of this magazine. My own interest lies in film music, but not the glossy musicals such as "The Sound Of Music" or "South Pacific". The music which appeals to me most is of a more imaginative nature, namely the 'background' music, as it is commonly known.

I recently purchased the soundtrack album of "Stagecoach", quite a rarity in my opinion, and as all members should know, one of Bing's many films. But although he does not sing on this record, the haunting quality of the music suggests to me that it is a Crosby film. The whine of the mouth-organ as it plays the main theme of the film, is reminiscent of Bing's beautiful recording of "True Love" from "High Society". The comparison is based entirely on personal opinion, and I wouldn't expect other listeners to agree. What I am attempting to convey is that with Bing, there is an aura of supreme professionalism surrounding him, which projects itself into the music of a film without him singing a note.

Bing's role as the drunken doctor in "Stagecoach", played with impeccable perfection, impressed the critics and proved to be a triumph of

casting. It was hardly the same Mr.C. that we all know, but then again, shows how versatile he can be when the role demands. Little wonder that Bing has become a household name for over 40 years!

Well, it seems that I have been trespassing in your territory for long enough, but before I sign off, let me leave you with one thought... it is coincidental that back in 1935 when Bing was building the foundations of his fabulous career, another "living legend" was taken from us, meeting his untimely death in a motor-cycle accident. But that's another sound-track album!

NORMAN BANKS, M.B.E., INTERVIEWS KATHRYN CROSBY

(submitted by the ICC's Australian Representative, KEITH HYDE)

ICC members may recall an interview which Mr. Banks, of 3AW, Melbourne, had with Bing Crosby about a year ago. This was fully transcribed by myself and published in "BING" magazine. Early last year, Mr. Banks, whilst overseas, recorded another interview, this time with Kathryn Crosby, and I have transcribed this most interesting item which I feel sure that all our members will enjoy....particularly the 'fairer' sex.

The interview was introduced by John Worthy as follows:
"Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm John Worthy. The Uacquarie Broadcasting Network have asked me to introduce what we believe to be one of the most human interviews ever conducted by Norman Banks during 40 years of radio interviewing. The personality is Mrs. Bing Crosby, the former Kathy Grant, film star, nurse, housewife and mother. During his overseas tour, Norman was invited to the Crosby home at Hillsborough near San Francisco on Christmas Eve, just as the Crosby household was actually putting the final touches to Christmas preparations. This warm and human interview with Kathy, Mrs. Bing Crosby, is exclusive to the Uacquarie Broadcasting Network. Here is Norman Banks...."

NORMAN: It's a tremendous pleasure for me, personally, ladies and gentlemen, to be able to say "How do you do" to Mrs. Bing Crosby.

KATHY: Hello Norman. It's been so nice to have you to tea this afternoon.

NORMAN: Yes indeed, and what I liked, Kathryn, is the way you served the tea. It had a real British flavour about it.

KATHY: Did it really? Well, I'm so pleased. They've been trying to teach me how to do it properly for years, but really I just love tea and it pleases me that you like it too.

NORMAN: I think that you do <u>everything</u> properly. I was just looking at this - what <u>is</u> this room? A living room?

KATHY: This is the living room. Alan Hisher, who is our British butler, calls it the drawing room, and maybe Bing told you last year, the woodwork is the Spockford Room from Comc Abbey. Mr. William Randolph Hurst found it years and years ago and had it stored in a warehouse, complete to the marble fireplace with all the urns and the chalises, the flowers, and the overmantle painting of the cherubs and grapes. He and Mr. Hurst used to talk about the beauty of wood, and when he found this hou e he sent me back with a friend of John Scott Trotter's, who you probably know....

NORMAN: Indeed!

KATHY: ....because of his musical background. We were sort of rambling through a cold warehouse on the east river, and we'd found a picture of this room in a catalogue and thought we'd like to see it. So the very nice Scottish caretaker took us to the third floor and pointed to a number of boxes right at the back, and said "There it is!"....all eleven boxes - that was all we saw!

NORMAN: How amazing!

KATHY: But Bing took a chance and we had it fitted into this room where it seems to fit like a glove. We love it, really a great deal. The cornice is, of course, with all the hand carving and the pretty little things that you 'feel' in a room, rather than see. Really, it's kind of a grey colour, and the carved wood is slightly darker grey. We were trying to match the grey in the mantlepiece and we thought that we would get a sort of dove grey, and a crotchety old woodworker - because most of the good woodworkers are old and crotchety.

NORMAN: Definitely. There are craftsmen and creaftsmen are always crotchety!

KATHY: Absolutely. He said, "I want to tell you that your dove grey is blue jay grey", so it evidently had a lot of blue in it as well.

NORMAN: You didn't mention the huge doors.

KATHY: These extend almost from the floors to the high ceiling, 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 sets of double doors, and they all open out - the thing that pleased both Bing and me about the house most. First, there's a school room in the attic with little cubby holes and good lighting places for just exactly three small children, with high ceilings and lots of air and light.

NORMAN: Are you suggesting that the bedrooms decided the number of your family?

KATHY: Well, I won't say that - I just think it kind of clever that there are three cubby holes up in the attic!

NORMAN: Incidentally, one of your children was born on a rather auspicious occasion, per a great Australian singer, Joan Sutherland.

KATHY: Absolutely! And for that moment of appearance, I must say I wish he'd held off his debut for just a few hours longer, because I was going to see Joan Sutherland in "La Traviata" on October 29th 1961. Strange I should remember exactly the date, don't you think? It was a Sunday....

NORMAN: I don't think so! (laughs)

KATHY: It was a Sunday and a sunny day, and I was all dressed up to go with Edie Adams, Ernie Kovacs wife, and we had the chauffeur, and were all done up to the teeth. The doctor had said we might stop by his home for a little test, because I was rather huge at that time. Sure enough, I had a beautiful contraction and he said, "I think instead of the opera, you might go into hospital with me". I said that I wouldn't dream of it - I'm on my way to see Joan Sutherland. He said, "You'll deliver between act one and act two if you don't come with me!", so off came the beautiful suit and on went his white 'Dolly's' bathrobe and their daughter's slidy slippers, and we slunk in the back door of the hospital and had a baby instead! But he was rather a good boy - 9lbs 2ozs is a pretty good debut itself!

NORMAN: This is Nathanial?

KATHY: Yes.

NORMAN: Nathanial said "Hello" in this microphone last June. I think it was June 12 months.

KATHY: Did he? He's nine years old now and quite a marvellous boy.

NORMAN: Well, he was giving Bing the run-a-round on this little miniature baseball track you have outside that day.

KATHY: Well, that's much better. I much prefer that to when he starts to define football terms to me. He thinks he's going to educate me about American football. He also knows about Australian football, and soccer and rugby!

NORMAN: Australian football? It's a good game itself.

KATHY: Absolutely! And he tries to explain that to me. Now I'm hopeless in anybody's language about anybody's game!

NORMAN: I don't think you're hopeless in anything! As a matter of fact, Kathryn, when I look around your room, the decoration of your house is simply superb, but the story about these 'cut-outs', which semi-conceal the big glass doors which I have mentioned already - where did you get them?

KATHY: I stole them! Well, not exactly stole them!

NORMAN: Not quite?

KATHY: We just did the Christmas Special, you know, a few months ago. It has been seen in the States, to great reviews I must say.

NORMAN: We missed it last night. It was on here in San Francisco. We came in on a Quantas aircraft just as you and the family were being screened.

KATHY: Ah well, I'm sorry you missed it, because Christmas, of course, comes very early for us. Every time we do a Christmas Special the children really feel that's their Christmas experience, and all you have to do is hear Bing's voice and it's Christmas time. But doing the show, the very imaginative art director, Ray Clossen, had designed these white ply-board window 'cut-outs', and there is this paper sculpture, I think they call it, of the Three Wise Men and The Madonna, and an angel with a trumpet, and a church with some bells, and another one.

NORMAN: A different motif in every one?

KATHY: Absolutely. But just the thinnest thing - and it's a marvellous thing to me to see how much music can be created by just a piece of paper, cut and pasted onto another one.

NORMAN: You didn't tell us where you got them - here, of course.

KATHY: Well, I asked for them. I really felt they were kind of small and they said, "Well, we're just going to destroy them after the show, so of course you may have them", and they had made up a little box with all the paper sculptures, and I said, "Well, what about the picture frames?", and they said, "Well, they're very big and heavy. Are you sure you want them?" I said, "Yes please, because it has to come together", so they sent them, because each one weighs about 10 lbs. I really planned to put them under my arm and carry them home, but it didn't work out that way.

NORMAN: What about the other decorations? As soon as you step inside the main entrance hall of this wonderful house, you get the feeling of Christmas. I did, this afternoon, when I came in.

KATHY: But that's because it's Christmas time, and the children had started. We all do most of our Christmas decorations ourselves.

NORMAN: Where did you get the tree?

KATHY: The tree came from - well, our British butlers have been working on that for quite a while. We have the tree lots. We used to bring down the tree from the ranch, but you could lose more windows in cars that way, so we decided to do the simple American thing and let George do it, and we find all the Christmas tree lots which, of course, are full here now with all the colour Christmas trees. We have a green one, but a very tall one. It's 20 feet high I would say, and on the tree goes the home-made decorations.

NORMAN: And it fits in perfectly into the staircable section of the stairwell to perfection, doesn't it?

KATHY: It really kind of goes there.

NORMAN: You couldn't have your mother this year?

KATHY: No. I'm very sorry, but I think about last year when mother was here - she's such an artistic spirit, and has always done things beautifully, and things that are good by the hand have always come very hard to me. So I spend four days making one star of foam and putting on the sequins and the little things, and I finally said the tree is not going to get done....it's going to be terrible. She said, "I suspect that I'm being rail-roaded into something". I said, "Yes, mother - what about just a few little velvet bows to tie all this 'hodge-podge' of home-made decorations together?", and within 2½ hours she'd made the most beautiful red velvet bows. They're not on the tree yet. We'll put them on last, but that will go with us, of course, for years and years. Mother was killed in an automobile accident.

NORMAN: This is what I was going to ask you about - you know, I still cannot understand. I rang Larry from Melbourne to find out the story because there was a brief reference to the accident; no names and nothing else, and I thought I've got to find out what's happened and who's involved.

KATHY: Well, the children.

NORMAN: Why was it withheld?

KATHY: I don't know....I really don't know, because we had so many friends who were distressed about it. I think Larry thought he was doing the very best thing for us, and really, mother was not fatally injured at the time of the accident. She grabbed Harry and saved his life.

NORMAN: How old is Harry?

KATHY: Harry is 12, and because the boys were asleep, and Mary Francis was awake at the time of the accident, she grabbed Grannie's shoulder, but when they were hit, of course, everyone bounced loose.

NORMAN: No seat belts?

KATHY: No, because Grandmothers and Grandfathers are a great deal more lenient than parents, you see.

NORMAN: You would have insisted?

KATHY: Absolutely! And yet with all my insistance, Harry has fallen out of a car, so there comes the time when you relax your negligence and it always hurts. Mother had eight broken ribs and was doing very well in the hospital. I was very proud of her, and we checked the children - they were all stitched up nicely, and Mary Francis refused to let them shave her hair off, and she held her own very well, I thought. But then I talked with mother, and she said, "Take the children home", because Bing was away doing a picture then and would naturally be distressed, so I got them home and school started the day following. They were in school and Harry said, "I don't want people to think I'm coming for sympathy with my head bandaged". They looked like Coxe's Army staggering into school! Their heads were bandaged and they were limping a little bit. Mary Frances had a cut on one arm. I said, "But darling, since you've had the accident, you might as well get the sympathy!", so they were fine!

(To be continued in a future issue.)

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OF INTEREST TO THE BING BUYER

LWS 344 "Bing Crosby - The Songs I Love", is an album extracted from the Longines six-L.P. Treasury, and now on sale in the shops, priced at 75p. The disc is identical to record number two in the set, and contains the following tracks by Bing:- "Ballin' The Jack", "Old Buttermilk Sky", "The Song Is Ended", "I've Heard That Song Before", "Remember" and "I'll Take Romance". The remainder of the tracks are orchestral items only.

Longines have also released a single L.P. from their set entitled "Those Memory Years", but there are no Bing tracks on this issue. Also priced at 75p, the disc serves to give some idea of what one can expect if purchasing the entire set.

It seems strange that the Longines Symphonette Society, who once produced and distributed records on a private, limited basis, are now making their recordings available to the general public....at at such reduced prices, too!

Not much in the way of new material to report this month, we fear! Let's hope that the situation brightens up in time for the May edition of "BING".

THE REMAINDER OF THIS ISSUE HAS BEEN COMPILED AND TYPED BY OUR SECRETARY.

YOUR SECRETARY'S - REG BRISTO'S - CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THIS QUARTER

"......I could write reams and reams, and reams! And it all be

ABOUT BING

.....but I fear this letter will be on the short side..."

Thus, my correspondent! Let's see how it turned out!

"I Twas nice of you to remember me. I'm not likely to forget those wonderful letters you sent me when it was "outside the ranks. Such a lot seems to have happened since we corresponded, but one thing I am indebted to you for isyour instrumentality in putting me in touch with Leslie Phythian. Do you remember that you gave me his name and address and said - "...a most kindly man."

That was the understatement of the year. I only knew him for a short time before his sudden and very sad death, but I found him to be a truly wonderful person. Strange to say, only the day before his death I received a very brief note from him giving me the "okay" regarding a member of the ICC whom I had asked him about regarding taping. He said in his note - "Work is hectic beyond description. Will write and enlarge on this (the taping) as soon as I can".He also enclosed a copy of the "Liverpool Weekly News" in which was a picture of himself and Bing taken at Cockermouth, with a write-up about it. He said "....we haven't touched upon my soccer activities yet, have we?"

You may wonder why I haven't wanted the Mini-Discography before - well, I've been hoping against hope to come across a copy of the 4 parts that include EVERY title that Bing has ever recorded but I don't think now I'm going to stand a chance. I would dearly love these, being such a "Crosby nut". I'm worse now than when I first wrote to you!

You may remember, Reg, that I asked you if you had certain Bing records for sale. I know I asked you about certain titles, because you said you could tell I was a "discerning enthusiast" by my choice of titles. If I was to tell you all that transpired after that I would be here all day. One thing hinged on another. I was in touch with Eric Griffiths, then Leslie Gaylor and Peter Robinson - and Frank Murphy, too.

You said, Leslie Phythian will not write immediately, but "reply he certainly would..." He certainly did, and what is more he sent me about 15 78s and the first Longines set that was issued. I can never begin to tell you how kind he was to me. He positively refused payment, but said if I felt so inclined, I could make a small donation to the Mentally Handicapped Childrens' Fund, which I did, of course - at least, I sent the money to him and he included it with his own. It was a Christmas time.

I also received from him the Christmas before he died (he died in the January you will remember), and EP of Bing's Christmas songs, and a lovely Christmas card, which I will always keep. He popped into the office with the record, but I never had the joy of meeting him face to face, as he popped out just as quickly as he popped in. About the Longines set, he said that they had issued another with more Bing titles on it, so he just had to purchase it, hence him having two sets. Mine has "Ole Buttermilk Sky", "My Prayer", and "Chapel in the Moonlight" on. You will know the one I mean. These records of Leslie's will be treasured by me for the rest of my life. Apart from his generosity, I was going through a rather bad time when first I wrote to him, which he seemed to sense from my letters and he asked if he could be of any help in any way at all. He was a most wonderful and wonderful person.

Thinking back now, I can't remember for the life of me howyour name was given to me, or that of Leslie Gaylor or Peter Robinson. Such a lot seems to have happened, one way and another. All I know is that Peter's second letter stated the names of two likely people who would be able to help me re. Bing 78s. He, Peter, said he only collected Bing LPs. In passing - I wondery why? I wrote to several people whose names I had seen in a magazine with Bing records for sale. I got about a dozen in this way, but what a disappointment I got when I listened to them, for, although they had been graded G or VG they were shockers! I would have graded them "A" for Atrocious. Still, we learn by our mistakes. I will not be taken in that way again - not that I have any need, because I have two tape records now.

The other person I had written to who had non-Bing records for sale was a chap by the name of Simon Phillips. He was indeed a "Good Samaritan" because, although he had nothing of Bing to offer, he was good enough to send my type-written lists of "wants" to two friends of his who were Bing collectors, and who may be able to help me. Well, these two collectors turned out to be Eric Griffiths and John Bassett. Both wrote to say that they had no Bing discs for sale, but they could help me out if I had a tape recorder. I didn't have one, and what is more, I didn't know the first thing about them, but as soon as I learned that I would be able to get all the wonderful titles I wanted on tape, I bought one in the Sales - it was January. Believe me, Reg, I was on top of the world - a beautiful dream come true. I tossed up as to which of the two collectors I should get to do the taping for me - and it fell to Eric. He happened to have the larger collection. And Leslie Phythian gave him such a good name. "Unreservedly recommended - andyou can quote me if you like" said Leslie. But don't misunderstand me, John was wonderful too, and gave me lots of hints and all kinds of helpful information - apart from the fact that he has a great sense of humour and a very friendly nature. He had me in stitches with some of the things he said in his letters. I didn't think there was another person on the face of the earth as fanatical about Bing as I was - and am, but I met my match in John Bassett. Eric is entirely different, but he's a verynice person when you get to know him, and I will be indebted to him for life for all he has done for me. He knows how I feel about it all, of course... I could weep when I sit down and look at all the wonderful tapes he has done for me. Even yet I cannot believe that I actually possess all this fantastic material. It's all too good to be true. In fact, I think I rather embarrassed Eric by continually going over the same ground about all he had done for me, and never being out of his debt, but I think he knows me now, and appreciates how I feel. Beautiful Bing tones floating out everywhere, all the time. I never thought I would ever live to see the day - obtaining the unobtainable, I mean.

I also have some N/Cs, too (Non-commercials). Eric actually went through a number of the Kraft, Philco, Chesterfield and GEC shows for me and taped the Bing items ONLY, because he knew I only wanted these. I also have the Mack Sennett shorts. The quality of these is poor, for which Eric apologised, and also some of the Kraft songs are poor, but I understand that this cannot be helped. Better to have them poor than not to have them at all... aren't they a wonderful lot in the ICC?

By the way, you must have thought that it took me long enough to decide to join. Well, Leslie neither encouraged me nor discouraged me. He said he did not want to influence me in any way, which I find rather strange when I think about it. He was a member himself! Anyway, I'm a member now - and that's all that matters. My onceregret is that I did not join years ago. Think how much further on I would have been....

I must say at this stage how much I am now enjoying "BING". It grows on you, and what I particularly like about it is that it is practically all Bing, if you follow me. It really lives up to its title. Other magazines, apparently, find it necessary to draw upon other artists. That's why I realise that you and John have a very tough time in producing a magazine like you are doing. By the way, please give my very kind regards to John - and also my congratulations on his recent marriage. I presume it was fairly recent because he was not married when I last wrote to him. Tell him I hope he will be very happy. I think it was you yourself who said in the last but one issue that he was married - just in passing you mentioned it!

Like you Reg, I don't care much for the"fluffs" in Bing's recordings which have had so much publicity in recent years among collectors. Some of them, or rather, reading about them, quite upset me. But I've got over it now. It certainly took the wind out of my sails when I read of some of these "fluffs", but I realise now that Bing never meant any harm when he used those expletives. I appreciate that he is a deeply religious man, no doubt much more so now than then...I have never placed Bing on a pedestal, nor has there ever been any hero-worship involved, but, nevertheless, he is the "Cats-Whiskers" isn't he? Quite incomparable as far as human beings are concerned. I guess I was very impressionable at the very early age when I first saw Bing in "The Road to Zanzibar" and I've been that way ever since. If he were knock-kneed, bow-legged, cross-eyed and stuttered, he would still be my favourite, instead of which he has only to appear and utter one syllable - and everyone else just fades into insignicance.

I think what a lot of non-Bing fans miss (and perhaps even some Bing fans too) is the fact that they do not, or cannot, visualise his expressions when listening to his records. I suppose you have got to know a person really well over a long period of time before you can do this. I love his expressions and spontaneous laughter in the number "Don't Be A Do-Badder"; also in the scene from "Blue Skies" where he was singing "Running Around in Circles" to the little girl. Do you remember that one? Then there is "But Beautiful" where he was singing to Dorothy Lamour in "Road to Rio". There were some wonderful expressions there. And how about "High Society"? What a super Christmas treat for us all. He had lovely expressions when singing "My Little One", and the number that will go down in history I'm sure (and I am far from being a jazz-lover) is "Now You Has Jazz". This is absolutely breath-taking, and the mannerisms, expressions and laughter are a joy to behold. Do you think I am mad? Last, but not least, with hundreds more in between that I have missed, there was Bing on the David Frost Show. How about all the expressions and old mannerisms there - and those wonderful "Bs" in "Blueberry Hill". I think Bing's "Bs" are out of this world.....

In case you think that I am "rolling in money" seeing I have two tape recorders, I ould hasten to add that my cousin Vic, gave me his in exchange for 60 of my non-Bing LPs which I had been collecting since the age of 26. He bought a recorder just after I bought mine, but the novelty soon wore off with him and he grew tired of it. He made the suggestion of the swop, and I jumped at it, especially seeing that he said he would leave the records with me until I had taped the tracks that I particularly liked from them all. This task I have nearly completed, but sometimes I think I must be out of my tiny mind doing it because the singers give me a pain in the neck at times, comparing them with Bing. My own recorder is a Grundig 124, 2-track, and Vic's (now mine) is a Marconiphone 2-track - both lovely machines. I would never have had two recorders but for the swop. I'm equipped with two because I can "dub" to my heart's content and do all kinds of weird

and wonderful things with Bing's songs. Then I have my radiogram that my pappa bought me when I was 21. It is beautiful, and I won't let anyone go near it but me. I may have told you that I lost my dad in 1966, so that my mum is on her own now - but for me.

I am not an extravagant person in other ways, and that is why I have really been able to go to town regarding my Bing tapes, and get such a lot of material. After all, I thought I owed it to myself, seeing that I had parted with all my Bing records a few months after my 21st birthday because of a personal tragedy at that time - this affected me for four long years.....to the despair of my dear parents. Everything went to the wind...I thought I never wanted to listen to Bing again..it was bed to work...but the eternal healer came into operation... and I began to "come round". I realised what a fool I had been in letting all my treasures go like that, because I can assure you I did "treasure" them all. And, of course, I found it extremely hard to get hold of Bing 78s again, although I did manage to get a fair number just before they withdrew them from the shops. I also bought, of course, a number of Bing LPS over the following years but there were a lot of titles on 78s that I just could not get hold of. I had given up all hope until Eric came on the scene - now I have all those wonderful songs on tape - "Me and the Moon", "Hawaiian Paradise", and so on, and many, many, more. I have so many titles I had not even previously heard about. I was introduced to the "young Bing", whom incidentally, I took quite a while to get used to. He seemed so strange to me singing songs like "A Faded Summer Love," "Little Dutch Mill", "Shadows on the Window", etc., but I love them all now though I cannot "visualise" these quite the same because I didn't know Bing then.

Another lovely scene I have thought about - and one of my favourites too - is "The Bells of St. Mary's" where Bing is singing at the piano. This is one of my best "visualisations" and is full of expression and mannerisms that we know so well. Do you remember where Bing said - "How about Birmingham Bertha? Good toon!" Then, after the last line of the song, Bing comes in "Won't you ring dem bells.." (the word "bells" being right down in his boots and absolutely divine). He laughs and says: "I haven't done that for years. I just had to try it." This is a real gem to me. The best film of Bing I have ever seen is "Little Boy Lost", which is packed full with expressions and mannerisms from beginning to end. This beats all others for "visualisations".

Having studied BING closely it comes first with me. Shall I tell you why? It is because it is a much more "intimate" - and "dedicated" magazine. I had to feel for those words, but I know this much, the Secretary and Editor are completely dedicated. You open BING at random (not that I do!) at say page 4, at page 16, at page 25 and sure enough you will read about Bing himself, not just somebody who perhaps worked with him or, for that matter, had nothing to do with whatsoever. That is what I like about BING. It truly is Bing in every sense of the word. Like Leslie Phythian once said: "Bing is such a fascinating individual, as singer, as actor, and anything else you care to name, that it is impossible to reach a point where you can hear or read too much about him." I guess that sums it up - and that's what BING is clearly dedicated to... one can never get too much of Bing...

Thinking back to yours letters Reg (I have them in a cupboard at home) although you did not know me you were kind enough to offer to purchase the Ace of Hearts labels for me and post them on. I was, to you, a perfect stranger - yet you offered this. You also gave me information about the then latest LP "Thoroughly Modern Bing". You said I might not take to it because it was rather different...

Well, I did take to it. I take to anything of Bing's really - he has only to breathe on a record. By the way, his breathing is particularly noticeable on "My Little One". I play this one over and over again. I have the LP, of course, but like so many others, I've taped it - because I can't afford to wear out the LP. That is why a tape recorder was really a "must" for me, because my Bing records are so precious that I just cannot play them. I just "take them out, gaze at them for a while, and then put them back".....

I much appreciate your kindness and helpfulness. You gave me information re. Bing's later LPs which I bought. I remember you said one of your favourites was "With Every Breath I Take". I love this one, too. But I keep changing my favourites all the time. Lately I have been humming "Beautiful Kahana".....

* *

THERE IT IS! THE WONDROUS, WONDERFUL, WORLD OF CROSBYANA ! That's why I've printed this letter - for surely it's all there! Actually, I've edited this lovely letter considerably - one wonders what would happen if this lady decided to write a long letter. But I jest - the writer did apologise for the inordinate length of her writing. But she shouldn't have bothered - I love every line of it. I'm sure our readers will, too - and see a part of THEIR world of Crosbyana in it.

This particular "Crosby Nut" (I use the lady's own description!) is Miss Olive Gregory, of "Ebenezer", 20, Joah Avenue, Moreton, Wirral, L46 6BZ. Olive mentioned in her letter how old she was - is - but I gallantly defend the feminine right to be coy on this touchy topic! You will have observed however, that Olive had to "get to know the 1930's Bing.." And she couldn't have known much about the 1940's Bing either..... Let's go through the letter again - this lovely letter that illustrates, as I said above, the wondrous world of Crosbyana. The power of Bing Crosby to affect our lives...

An odd letter to a stranger.... put in touch with other strangers ... all quickly become friends, if only on paper. The loss of precious 78s over such a long span of years - didn't that happen to many of us? The rebirth, the rennaisance, when we frantically tried to "catch up" - the deliverance in the way of LPs. The further incredible deliverance with the arrival of - the tape recorder. Then, one recorder quickly becomes NOT ENOUGH! A second is needed to dub tape from tape.... the progression to non-commercial material... the final resolve (seldom realised, alas) to possess everything Mr. Crosby ever recorded. Seldom realised! How can it be when we consider that Bing seemed to be speaking or singing into a microphone for the larger part of 40 years during his waking hours...

Olive, I feel, graphically illustrates the way admiration forthe talents of Bing Crosby can shape, comfort, and indeed, inspire one's own life. IS there a more gratifying pursuit? I know that, personally, I am very proud to have figured in Olive's "story"....

I remember she wrote to me several years ago - a letter right out of the blue, as are so many I receive. Anyone who shows an interest in Bing commands my attention: as Olive has shewn, I replied to her and offered assistance. I am particularly delighted that I was the means of introducing her to the late Leslie Phythian, whose death saddened us all a couple of years ago. Indeed, he was a kindly man... but having "launched" Olive, as it were, I heard no more from her. I didn't see her name in the magazine, and it wasn't until I took over from Frank Murphy and got the membership list from him, that I saw again the name of Miss Olive Gregory.

Subsequently, when I sent out the first "new" issues of BING, I included a little note to Olive saying I remembered her letter to me a few years before.

John and I are certainly appreciative of Olive's comments on BING. Our aim is just that - Bing!

And I like her "visualisations", too! I suppose that once one has seen - in a film - as well as heard Bing a certain song, one automatically pictures him in the mind's eye whenever that song is played on record. You will note, too, Olive has fallen willy-nilly for another of the Crosby attributes - the aside! That scene from "Bells of St. Mary's" with Bing finishing off the title song is a real beauty....

One could, of course, write half a dozen issues of BING if we care to enlarge on some of the points she raises - the regular changing of her favourite Bing record for a start - but the letter, on this occasion, deserves to stand on its own considerable merits, without further comment from me - except to say, for all of us, "Thanks, Olive, write again some day - soon..."

* * * \

Apart from the two films, my Christmas listening consisted of the usual albums - the first, the original still rates No. 1 for me, with "Jingle Bells", "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" - and that zippy Hawaiian Christmas number, "Mele Kalikimaka". This is, of course, LAT 8556 and includes naturally all the multi-million numbers, "Silent Night" and "White Christmas". And I always give a turn to "Peace Prayer of Saint Francis" and "The Blessing of Saint Francis" on Christmas morning. I'm not the most religious man in the world, alas, but I always find Bing's rendering of these out-of-the-general-run items intensely moving. The voice of the Brother and Victor Young's quite emotive arrangements combined with Bing's resonant voice and undoubted reverence, make these wonderful Christmas records, I feel.

* *

AS ALWAYS, I want to thank all those members who greeted I and the family with Christmas cards - in a lot of cases it was noted that considerable care had gone into their selection to obtain a "musical angle"! We always find this gesture so warming - but are helpless to reply in kind to so many.

It will, no doubt, be invidious for me to single out two, but I feel I should.

I was very happy indeed to receive Bing's most colourful greetings card. It showed Bing, Kathy and the three children in colourful (red) attire, and the greetings for Christmas were conveyed in copperplate golden script. I regard this greeting of course as addressed to all members of the International Crosby Circle through myself.

And I've often read that Ron Bozley fixes up an original Crosby card each year. I was delighted to be the recipient of one this year... but, again my warmest thanks to all.

* *

IN A RECENT LETTER, ROY CHAPPELL, MY VERY GOOD FRIEND - "THE SINGER WITH A TOUCH OF THE BINGS" ! - enclosed the following:

"BING ON VELVET" :

ARTIST KEN WILLIAMS IS TAKING ORDERS FOR PORTRAITS OF BING ON VELVET. EACH IS PRICED AT £3. HIS FRIEND ROY CHAPPELL WILL BE HAPPY TO RECEIVE ORDERS AT HIS HOME, 44, BARLOW RD LEVENSHULME, MANCHESTER M19 3DA. (PHONE if you care 061-224-3195). KEN HOPES TO BE ABLE TO USE TWO BASIC COLOURS, DEP PURPOSE and BLUE OF THE NIGHT. THEY WILL MEASURE 12" x 15" UNMOUNTED.

Coming from such a source as Roy, I am very happy to advertise this enterprise. I must make it clear, however, that at this stage I have not seen KEN WILLIAMS'S EFFORTS. But the idea commends itself to me as most attractive and a highly desirable Crosbyana acquisition. So, place your orders ladies and gentlemen - they're bound to look handsome in the Crosby Room - or the sitting room, come to that!

* +=+=+=+=+=+=* *

You will, no doubt, have noted that our propagandist par excellence, LESLIE GAYLOR, continues his remorseless attack on the newspaper columns with his letters on behalf of the Maestro! And with considerable success, too, for he seems to reach the National dailies with ease and regularity. I loved that one about "..what's Bing Crosby been doing this past 40 years, reciting nursery rhymes?" Someone had described a certain "Thin Man" as the King of Song.... Keep it up Leslie, we all applaud your stout efforts.

EXAMINATION SUBJECT !!

BING CROSBY

WHO ELSE?

The phenomenon that is Bing Crosby has been subjected to endless scrutiny with a view to arriving, precisely, at the actual qualities he possessed which made him such a supremely unique singer. Way, way back an eminent Dr. of Music - Dr. Mize - wrote a book that practically dissected every note Bing had sung. The doctor embarked upon his subject with almost scientific thoroughness. This may be news to younger and newer readers, but it is so. Needless to say in answer to your immediate question: The book is almost impossible to obtain today but several copies are owned by collectors in this country.

Many other books have been written about Bing, of course; and in a humbler fashion, perhaps, this magazine and others similar to it, attempt the task of recording for posterity this incomparable man - singer, actor, entertainer, and in recent years, philosopher; the acknowledged Elder Statesman of world entertainment.

That non-Crosby fans continue to regard him as a subject for analysis is evidenced by a letter I received a few weeks ago. As I said, apropos Olive Gregory's letter of some years ago, I get many letters out of the blue (of the night!) from non-members who ask for information about Bing. I spend a lot of time checking record numbers, titles, etc., I search out old pictures of the Maestro, try and confirm what he sang on the BBC in 1944 - all sorts of enquiries which I am very happy to try and deal with. Only a few weeks ago I had a most urgent letter from a stranger: "I hear Bing Crosby is coming to England soon....can you tell me how I can get to meet him?.." In this case I had to say, alas, that there were hundreds of ICC members who wanted to do just that!

All of which brings me to the following letter I recently received:

> Hemel Hempstead,
> HERTS.
>
> Dear Sir,
>
> I am doing a music study on Bing Crosby for an examination to be taken in a few months' time. I am extremely short on information and wondered if you could help me? I have read his autobiography and found it very helpful, but he did not mention why he chose to sing the style he did. Also he has not covered the Forties. I would be very grateful if you could send me some information.
>
> Yours faithfully,
>
> C. Simmonds (Miss)

That's all - half-a-dozen or so lines, quite formal, in what is clearly a young hand - Miss Simmonds doesn't say how old she is! But what a task to set anyone. I could name at least a dozen admirers who could have sat down

down and given Miss Simmonds all the information she wanted...but after all, I thought, I should make the attempt...

I put the letter aside, thinking "Gee whiz, that's a tall order..." and I was full up with preparations for this issue as well as other mail. Then one evening I put a sheet of paper in the typewriter, realising I should get out some books and write the young lady a precise, matter-of-fact run-down on some of Mr. Crosby's career and activities. But - I just ploughed into it. It came out like this:

Dear Miss Simmonds,

Thank you for your letter. You have set me quite a task! I will, however, try to assist you. Information on Bing? Well, how does one begin? Say that he is probably the greatest - and greatest-KNOWN - entertainer of the century? This is beyond doubt. He set a style of singing which gripped the whole world. It was an easy, informal, style which had an instant appeal. Not the least of its attributes was that it SOUNDED as if anyone could sing like it!

Bing himself - an incredibly modest man despite his phenomenal, long-lasting, success - always plays down, deprecates, his efforts. Characteristically, he just says "I was lucky.". Hence the title of his autobiography.

What Bing meant was that radio was just booming, as well as gramophone records, and he happened along at the right time. Even if there is a small element of truth in this it is much too simple an explanation, of course. Although deceptively casual in his approach - he has the superb knack of making his performances LOOK easy - his younger brother, Bob Crosby, himself a very famous bandleader, has remarked: "Yes, he just rolled UPHILL to success...." There is a wealth of meaning in this succinct remark. In fact, all the Crosby's seemed to possess this aptitude for the bon mot, the phrase which covered a lot of ground.

Bing, as almost everyone knows, has sold more gramophone records than anyone in the history of recorded music. He has been named "The First Citizen of the Recording Industry" by an American Chamber of Commerce. His donations to charities of all kinds, his gifts of libraries, gymnasia, endowments for students, etc. etc. run into millions of dollars. During the 2nd World War he spent a large part of his time promoting the sale of War Bonds. All the royalties from his immortal recording of "Silent Night", for instance, have gone to charities - and that record has sold over 30-million copies! When first asked to record this famous carol, incidentally, in typical fashion he refused: "I haven't the stature to sing that...I'm just a crooner..." He was persuaded otherwise. The point is that Crosby can, and has, sung practically everything - cowboy (country & Western) love ballads, jazz songs, blues, carols, hymns, comedy songs - he has even done "The Peace Prayer of St. Francis" and "The Blessing of Saint Francis." Bing can narrate in a beautifully modulated, sympathetic, resonant voice. He is, too, a master of dialect.

True, he sings informally, but anyone with half an ear for music can recognise instantly that there is a timbre, a quality to his voice, which is quite unique. It possesses a richness that could easily have been allied to opera - in fact, for radio and film roles he has flirted in that exacting medium and acquited himself as well as in all the others.

Bing himself, now THE Elder Statesman of world entertainment and, incidentally, a true philosopher, does seem genuinely puzzled at the

effect his singing had in the early Thirties. He says he was just "singin' around with bands, with the boys, having fun and, astonishingly, getting paid for it!" He never saw himself as a social, or entertaining, phenomenon. He certainly did not realise he was creating a part of indelible musical history in those far off-days. Yet for over 40 years his name has literally been a household one, both to young and old. That was another secret of Crosby's: unlike so many of today's entertainers and singers, his appeal was not to one section of the community. His voice had a universal appeal to young and old. And as you will perhaps have observed, today's pop stars speak of Mr. Crosby with something akin to reverence.

His records IN records will never be broken, if only because of his incredible longevity in recording. He first recorded in 1926 - and he actually made a new Christmas album last September - in 1971! His true sales of records can never really be ascertained because his records have been issued in every country in the world - even in places like China and Japan - on hundreds of different labels and have been constantly re-issued over the years so that now there are reissues of reissues! Even today his classic old 78s are still being reissued in microgroove form. And no doubt, will continue to be for many years.....

Why did he chose his style of singing? He didn't..he wanted to sing, and he sang. Bing says he was inspired - not influenced - by the late Al Jolson. He used to break all the rules of pukka-trained singers. He used to "bend" notes, "break" them, slur notes, alter the melody whilst maintaining the harmony - true extemporisation in many cases - and he was described by one inspired commentator as the singer "who put the famous Italian -opera 'sob' into the popular song." His diction has always been perfect, a priceless asset to any singer, and this can be accounted for by the fact that he did have elocution lessons as a lad. He was destined for the law profession - but he had no singing lessons, ever. His voice, therefore, can truthfully be called "natural".

By the 1940's, which you particularly mentioned, Bing was a world institution, even with the enemies of the 2nd World War, Japan and Germany. While radio stations were daily deluged with requests for Crosby records, there were certain isolated war fronts where radio stations were forbidden to play his records because the homesickness - and consequent drop in morale - became too pronounced when he sang some of his famous songs. When he came to Europe, for the very first time, incidentally, in 1944, he was feted and greeted by the greatest - and actually, in France, was the guest of the Supreme Allied Commander himself, General Eisenhower later, of course, President of the United States. Today he is frequently guest of, or host to, the American president. His voice was the first big world-shaking attraction and this so intrigued everyone that he was bound to appear in films. His success in this sphere was just as successful and for no less than 10 consecutive years he was voted the No. 1 box-office star. He has received gold discs for 22 million sellers KNOWN. There were many more records than clearly reached this number but were unaccounted for. He has received the Oscar for acting ability - though he, again, deprecates his screen roles. He says in this connection he merely "plays himself".

Although Bing, as I've said, had universal appeal, he is accepted by diehard jazzmen as a great jazz singer - a most unusual accolade for a singer who necessarily, because of his appeal, had to change his possibly preferred style. Literally everything he attempted became an instant success. It is not too far to go to say that once a song has been sung by Crosby there seems little or nothing anyone else can add to it. He has, of course, been the most imitated singer the world has known. Many careers have actually been built on copying, as far as is possible, the Crosby style.

Today Bing Crosby has come a long way from the young man who sang around with the bands in the 20's - today he is, as he always has been, a Roman Catholic and his religion has taken on a stronger significance over the years, he is a philospher, an intellectual, it might be justly claimed. When his first wife died in 1952 after more than 20 years of marriage in the proverbially "tinsel" city of Los Angeles - Hollywood - without a breath of innuendo, scandal or rumour, he spent some lonely years. He spent them "improving his mind", it would seem, and one of the results is that he is fluent in half a dozen languages.

Bing sprang from Irish stock, and never forgets it. At the same time he is intensely an American. But, truly, he and his talent belong to the world at large. Perhaps the world's No. 1 citizen.

I hope some of this helps.

Kindest regards and
all the best for the examination,
REG BRISTO.

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Well, will it help? I should think some of it, perhaps. But now I find myself intrigued: wondering what some of our readers would have written in reply to such a letter? Miss Simmonds, you will note, did not say that she was a fan of Bing's. What motivated her in her choice of Mr. Crosby as a subject for her forthcoming examination? No doubt I should have asked her! Perhaps her parents are Bing-fans and <u>their</u> admiration has triggered off her curiosity. If there are any further developments I shall be happy to pass them on to readers.

Meanwhile, if any readers care to give me their ideas on how they would have answered that letter I shall be most interested - and will certainly present their views and ideas here for general approbation.

****

Westward TV screened THE COUNTRY GIRL a few Sundays back - this is the film for her role in which Grace Kelly received the Oscar - and many readers, and indeed, picturegoers of the time, believe Bing should have got one also.

It wasn't all that long ago, it seems to me, that this particular film was on television. I believe I've said before I prefer those films were Bing does, by and large, play himself! I don't care for our Bing assuming a haunted, ravaged, character!

For me, the best part of this film (and here we get back to Olive Gregory!) was when Bing was in the recording studio, making "The Search is Through". This is easy to "visualise".....it seemed so authentic - except that Bing was dressed in a natty suit, whereas rumour has it that his clothes, during most recording sessions, were casual beyond the point of decent description!

Standing before the microphone, relaxed, yet obviously making sure he was doing a good job, with his young son "conducting" the orchestra from afar, and with his adoring wife looking on, it made a great scene - especially when, with the song ended, he comes across to join his family and on route looks up at the control box: "That one do you, Joe?" I reckon it did...

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MEMBERS VIEWS, LETTERS, SUGGESTIONS, ARTICLES ARE WARMLY WELCOME: WE WANT READERS TO "WRITE" THE MAG. SEND THEM TO JOHN BASSETT, at 3 Old Hall Court, Great Wakering, Essex, or to me, REG BRISTO, 7, Greenmeadow Close, Cwmbran, MON NP4 3NR.

BING CROSBY No 14

ACCOMPANIED BY—

PERRY BOTKIN

Previously in this Series:

1. John Scott Trotter.
2. Victor Young.
3. Paul Whiteman.
4. Buddy Cole.
5. Vic Schoen.
6. Gus Arnheim.
7. The Dorsey Bros.
8. Jimmie Grier.
9. Bob Crosby.
10. Lennie Hayton.
11. Georgie Stoll.
12. Billy May.
13. The McIntires - Lanie and Dick, Harry Owens.

Bing, one might say, has had many guitarists in his life! Three of the most prominent were, of course, the immortal Eddie Lang, Mike Pingitore, - and Perry Botkin.

Understandably, too. Most singers appreciate a good guitarist around - for their solid beat, and for their musical bridges, arpeggios, etc., to complement their - the singer's - phrasing.

You will see that Perry Botkin, with various aggregations first accompanied Bing on 22.3.49 - and made his last with Mr. C. on 14.11.53. Where was Perry before 1949?

Well, there you are: I set out on this series of accompanists, able to write a book on some of them, and not knowing a thing about others! But the pattern is, I've found that when a "new" accompanist appears he has often been associated with previous Crosby accompanists. I have a feeling that Perry Botkin played guitar in the John Scott Trotter orchestra. May I rely on someone telling us if this is so? And wasn't Perry seen in that fine film, "Birth of the Blues"? If this all sounds somewhat lame, may I timidly point out that Bing has had around 95 units accompanying him!

It goes without saying that Perry Botkin was a good, tasteful, musician - as a glance at the list of recordings will readily show. Plenty of melody, and when required, plenty of rhythm.

And Perry Botkin got onto the Roll of Honour of "Million-sellers" with the 1949 recording of "Dear Hearts & Gentle People", written by Hilliard and Fain. And perhaps one of Bing's most astonishing performances of all time came with his rumbustious rendering of that graphic number, "Mule Train". Such is Bing's mastery of dialect it needs little "visualisation" to imagine Bing hanging on the reins of a team of eight in this highly descriptive song - an exhilarating effort, and Perry Botkin's driving rhythm complements Bing in fine style.

"Home Cookin'" another good, melodic and rhythmic record which gained tremendous popularity and itself couldn't have been far short of selling a million.

The full list of recordings is on the next page, with further comments on them.

No.	Title:	R'ing Date.	Remarks.
1.	Riders in the Sky (A Cowboy Legend)	22.3.49	Inst.Acc.with Ken Darby Singers.
2.	Careless Hands.	"	"
3.	Mule Train.	26.10.49	String Band.
4.	Dear Hearts & Gentle People.	"	With Jud Conlon's Rhythmaires.
5.	Home Cookin'.	12.4.50	" " " "
6.	Two Shillelagh O'Sullivan.	19.2.52	" The King's Men.
7.	Rosaleen.	"	" " " "
8.	Don't Ever Be Afraid To Go Home.	"	
9.	You Don't Know What Lonesome Is.	17.6.52	Perry Botkin, guitar with the Cass County Boys.
10.	Open Up Your Heart.	"	" " "
11.	Tenderfoot.	10.2.53	Perry Botkin & his Guitars.
12.	Walk Me By The River.	"	
13.	Y'All Come.	14.11.53	With The Cass County Boys.
14.	Changing Partners.	"	" Jud Conlon's Rhythmaires.

A melodious list. One would go a long way to find a lovelier melody than "Changing Partners" - despite its rather startling super-soprano introduction! This high-pitched lady, incidentally, remains an unidentified member of Jud Conlon's Rhythmaires.

"Y'All Come" is another of these records that proved highly popular with its infectious cheerfulness. "Walk Me By The River" is a nice lilting ballad which many readers particularly like. "Careless Hands" is another record which one finds oneself humming for days after hearing it. And indeed, it was fairly recently revived.

Altogether, it can be said Perry Botkin's contributions to Bing's recording career - coming virtually bang in the middle of that career to date - has been a highly meritorious one.

CARMEN CAVALLARO

1.	I Can't Begin To Tell You.	7.8.45
2.	I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me.	"
3.	You Do.	4.6.47
4.	How Soon?	"
5.	The Four Winds & The Seven Seas.	6.6.49
6.	A Make Believe.	"

Just six tracks with this beautiful pianist, Carmen Cavallaro. A brilliant stylist - and accompanist to Bing, surely, as a gesture to the world's greatest popular singer, for Carmen is a brilliant pianist in his own right. Many albums of his tasteful playing are readily available in the shops today.

Here again, a million-seller was obtained with the beautiful song "I Can't Begin To Tell You" - written for the film "The Dolly Sisters". Bing and Carmen complemented one another in exemplary fashion in the measured rhythm of this ballad. No pyrotechnics from Carmen - just tasteful, stylish, playing.

Then you will note the similar-sounding title, "I Can't Believe That You're in Love With Me". Do you note the rather plaintive air that runs through most of these songs Bing did with Carmen Cavallaro? The two just mentioned, for instance, and then that quite unusual song "The Four Winds and The Seven Seas":

> You ask where I live - here's the answer I give..
> The four winds, and the seven seas....

Remember, a train came to town - and a stranger stepped down... end of lovely romance, we must assume! Then there is quite a favourite Crosby record of mine - the VERY plaintive "How Soon?" I am very fond of this record indeed.

Altogether, though small, Carmen Cavallaro's contribution to Bing's recording history is highly musical - and STYLISH!

* *

Throughout this series about Bing's accompanists, the record listings are taken from THE ROAD TO BING CROSBY, the monumental discography compiled by leading Crosbyana experts including Fred Reynolds, Ralph Harding, and the late Leslie Phythian, with others. I am indebted to them for their permission to utilise their work in this way.

* *

THERE IS A STOCK OF BING PICTURES - FIVE DIFFERENT ONES - ON GLOSSY PAPER AND EXCELLENT REPRODUCTIONS. THESE WERE INTENDED FOR "BING" MAGAZINE COVERS BUT UNFORTUNATELY METRICATION OF PAPER SIZES HAS MADE THEM USELESS FOR THIS PURPOSE - THEY ARE SLIGHTLY SMALLER THAN THIS PAGE! However, they are excellent pictures of Bing - three of them are particularly good. They will stand framing and will look well. I should think most readers would appreciate having them. And they can! I WILL POST OFF BY RETURN A SET OF ONE OF EACH OF THESE FIVE EXCELLENT PICTURES ON RECEIPT OF PO 22½p (2/6d), post paid of course. I would hope there will be enough for all - but don't delay and be disappointed! Stamps, or cheque, of course, to 2/6d will be equally acceptable.

* *

I UNDERSTAND MY GOOD FRIEND ED. TOWLER IS DISCUSSING IN THIS ISSUE CROSBY RECORD BUYERS - OR THE LACK OF THEM! I have my own definite ideas why Crosby records - and indeed, most good-quality records, don't sell these days. If you read the financial pages you will see that Decca and EMI are in a bad way with record sales. The story is the same in America. Everything is "gimmicky" today. It was Bing himself who remarked a few years back "...too many are in the market after the fast buck..."

I have been in several record shops when the "traveller" has been doing his stuff with the person in charge, either a young man, or a young woman. Often just out of their teens. "Now this is going well - play it loud when the shop is full..." And he pushes a trashy looking album by the Dead Beats, or the Drop-Outs, or some other similar-sounding name...

In addition to this "promotion" (sic) so many would-be - and "used-to-be" record buyers have just got out of the habit. They have got fed up of pushing through uncivil hordes of long-haired youngsters who stand around the records seemingly all day - without buying anything. Only last Saturday, I heard a manager threaten to call the police three times unless such a group moved. People just won't put up with this sort of thing...

One sees this attitude so often these days....how many real football supporters now don't go to football matches because of the riots, the

obscene language, obscene songs and general uncongeniality experienced at football matches these days? I used to go and see football matches from a very early age. I, and other lads, never dreamed of running on to the pitch when a goal was scored. Not because we were afraid of the police, or anyone else, simply because it was hallowed turf. For the players, not to be cut up by us - and not for us to needlessly hold up the game. Today it is a common and annoying sight.

If this makes me sound "not young at heart" it is misleading! I don't subscribe to the belief that all young people are the same - far from it. And I endeavour to keep with it. I go dancing regularly - provided a band is playing and not a "group" (sic) - and I collect quite a number of modern records. And, if I may be extremely personal and immodest - I ain't gone grey yet! But getting back to the non-promotion of records - except for the "fast buck" method with gimmick pop records. Polydor, I imagine, issues some of the finest recordings of all the companies. They are a high class label yet cover most fields. How many shops do you know that carry a wide-range of Polydor records? Very few indeed.... Like so many arts these days, the art of marketing gramophone records has gone by the board. It is in the hands of people who don't care - except for "the fast buck"....

As you may know; I edit and run "GOLDEN YEARS" which deals with the days of the Thirties, bands, singers, artists in general, etc. etc. Lew Stone, Al Bowlly, Denny Dennis, Roy Fox, Ambrose, Ray Noble, and so on and so on. Not a week goes by without me receiving a letter which runs on these lines:

"How I wish I had found GOLDEN YEARS earlier....I had no idea there had been wonderful lp reissues of these great artists....how can I catch up?" Which is what I said above - so many genuine record collectors, and buyers, gave up in despair when skiffle and Rock 'n' roll. They just gave up fighting their way through the "beatniks" to the counters - and awaiting their turn on the record-player while their offspring played Little Richard, The Stones, Led Zeppelin etc. and the whole gamut of rubbish.

There is a widespread habit these days of throwing, of all things, toilet rolls at football matches. I feel the practice might be extended to many record shops.

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LIFE WITH BING!

BY FRANK ASHURST

For a change, perhaps, my first acquaintance with Bing Crosby did not "grab" me for life! He has now, of course.... I was, I suppose 7-8 years old when I first saw Bing in a Mack Sennett film at a childrens' matinee. All I can remember is that in this film Bing had a car and while he was in the house a big man came and, for reasons best known to himself, smashed up the car with a sledgehammer. When Bing came out and viewed the wreckage he turned to the big man and with a nonchalance I was to come to be so familiar with - and appreciate - said to the big man: "Pity you did that - I was going to give you the car..." The big man started to cry.... that's all I can remember, but I remember I and the rest of the audience of kids just loved it!

I wasn't hearing Bing on the radio in those days, we hadn't aspired to a wireless, let alone a radiogram. This was the early Thirties and in any case, I wasn't particularly interested in singers. But I do remember, again, seeing Bing in a film called The Starmaker without being unduly impressed with the singing! I often wonder at my delayed-action admiration for Mr. Crosby! Its contrary, I feel, to most of the delightful experiences we read about in BING...

Then came that catastrophic milestone for all of us - the Second World War; it brought a second milestone for me: I started work. It was then that I really got the Bing bug. The lads at work used to listen to programmes on the American Forces network and we heard a lot of Bing on one programme especially - The Duffle Bag and it seemed all conversation at work after every broadcast was - Bing Crosby, and his records that had been featured in the latest programme. I remember one programme on AFN when Bing had come over to Europe. He came into the studio when one of his records was being played - I think it was "Just One More Chance". One of his early ones anyway, and he said to the DJ "Here, play something more modern!" And they played "San Fernando Valley".

Shortly afterwards came the big turning-point - but even so a fairly common experience, I fear. My parents bought me a portable, wind-up gramophone! I was hooked. I don't remember how many springs I went through on that glorious first gramophone I owned. I know the first record I actually bought under my own steam was "If I Had My Way", followed by "Please", "Sweet Leilani", "Temptation". So, my collection was under way. Wasn't easy to buy records in that non-affluent age and progress was slow. One week I had a big thrill when I actually bought three records in one go: I must have had a windfall from somewhere, tho' I can't remember what it was. These were "Trade Winds", "Beautiful Dreamer" and "Where the Blue of the Night". At my first attempt the shop had sold out and were re-ordering...and I had an agonising wait for a week or two. The lady in the shop tried hard to make me take "Beautiful Dreamer" by Richard Crooks in lieu of Bing! Well, I ask you. Mind, I liked Richard Crooks (and came to like him even more) but - instead of BING! The lady was only trying to be helpful, as Frankie Howerd might say, but I didn't appreciate it at the time. I impatiently awaited the three records.... three new ones at a time was an unbelievable luxury for me. Later on I had to buy "Trade Winds" and "Sweet Leilani" all over again - I had worn the originals out.

I have wonderful memories of me and my gramophone. Playing my records in the bedroom, sometimes outside in the sunshine - "Love in Bloom", "Poinciana", "Temptation", "Sing Me A Song of the Islands". Memories! Especially when three girls started coming round to listen to the records with me. I eventually married one of them and that's how Rene became a Bing fan, too. (Cont.p. 56)

NJC

DANGER - MAN AT WORK !
PLEASURE!

SEE PICTURE OPPOSITE + + + + + + +

I suppose there are more pictures of Bing than there are records! Some - most, infact, are the slightly "artificial" publicity stills from films and record publicity stunts. I like this picture very much...a craftsman at work! What was the occasion? Well, not a gramophone record session, see the "NBC" on the microphone. Casual dress, so probably a recording of a broadcast. Bing doesn't appear to be singing - or even talking. What IS he thinking? "Who wrote THIS tripe?" or "Hope I come in on the right beat, looks tricky." or "Don't go much on this - this won't sell!" Note the hat and the flamboyant sportscoat. Late 30's or early 40's, I would guess. Any ideas for a suitable caption? If so, we'll print them next time!

I HOPE THE FELLAS won't be offended but I was particularly impressed that two ladies, Brenda Miles and Olive Gregory both made the point that BING attempts to feature Bing ONLY! Very perceptive of them, and gratifying to both John and I for it is our avowed policy. Thank you ladies - we might co-opt you to the Editorial staff! Incidentally, my "DISCROSBY" has had to go by the board again - but I'm sure readers will appreciate that I have used excellent material from readers, and this must make for interesting changes.

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WE ARE ALL PAINFULLY AWARE OF WHAT INFLATION DURING THE PAST YEAR HAS DONE TO THE VALUE OF OUR MONEY. READERS WILL ALSO BE AWARE THAT SINCE TAKING OVER THE ICC I'VE NOT INCREASED THE ANNUAL SUBS. DESPITE FRIGHTENING INCREASES IN THE COST OF PAPER, INK, STENCILS - AND MOST OF ALL, POSTAGE. THIS ISSUE COSTS $4\frac{1}{2}$p each member AT HOME! Virtually an old 1/-. I anxiously await the end of my first year to see if we've broken even! Membership grows slowly. We could do with roping in more Crosby admirers! If you have a friend who IS, and has dropped out, bring him/her back into the fold!

Normally, if I have anything of interest to sell, surplus, I ask a price for it. Usually a moderate one, too. But because of the above situation - and a very unusual circumstance - I am departing from that principle FOR ONCE! By what is virtually a miracle, I have come into possession of a couple of copies of PART 4 of THE ROAD TO BING CROSBY, the discography (about 80 pages covering the period April '51 virtually to date) and also of the wartime "V" disc supplement to "The Road..." I invite offers for these: I do not expect grossly inflated offers, so do not be deterred. All proceeds will go towards the expenses of BING and not into my pocket, or anyone else's! In the event of matching bids, my wife will draw offers out of the hat! Fair enough? Let's see, you should get this by the 16th, so I'll hold it open until 26th February.

AND I MUST APOLOGISE FOR THE LATENESS OF THIS ISSUE. ALL MY FAULT, NOTHING TO DO WITH JOHN OR OUR OTHER CONTRIBUTORS! But I had a "lost week-end" getting it ready - not shoping (which I didn't mind), no football, no dancing, no drink... (ah, I don't mind the last, but the other two!). Anyway, here it is and we hope you enjoy it..

Welcome to Barry Adams in luckless Belfast; a very well known Crosbyite of P.....w, who wishes to be un-named!; R. Hampton, Southampton (!); C.F.Parker, Wolverhampton (up the Doog!); - and J. RAMSEY! This gentleman lives a stone's throw from me (sh! he thinks I'm a Welshman!) and has been a lifelong fan of Bing. Who would have believed it - and he has 1930's Christmas cards from Bing to prove it! We'll be meeting soon: and soon be enough for a Welsh Circle. Cymru am Bing! John remembers where the place I am now living was open fields. His lyrical address is Llanthewy Cottage, Llanthewy Vach, Caerleon! We'll soon be comparing tapes, records, &c. Happy listening to all...I know this isn't the last page, but its the only room I can find to say it. Cheers -

+ + + + + + + + REG BRISTO = = = = = = = JOHN BASSETT. + + + +

Inevitably the march of technical progress caught up with me - I sold the beloved portable (with quite a wrench) and bought an electrically-driven turntable and that wonderful invention - a pick-up! So, I could play my records through the radio. What an improvement - the records got a new depth and appeal.

It was around/then that I resorted to keeping scrapbooks about Bing...I tried to keep up by buying the 78s but they were coming so thick and fast from Mr. C. And while Bing had priority I perforce had to recognise that there were other artists around! Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, Harry James, Nelson Eddy, The Ink Spots and others.... yes, I had to have my quota of these. But have you noticed (of course you have!) few of them have had the lasting appeal of Bing and this is evidenced, even today, with the number of Bing records one can hear on the radio. Yes, today! I feel the current cloying Glenn Miller hysteria is not to be compared with the still-universal appeal of Bing Crosby.

My interest grew - I came across different "takes"! Different versions! I would never buy a record without hearing it first, even tho' in the case of Bing I already knew the record note for note! But I slipped up once; I bought the White Christmas EP without listening to it first. I'd already generously given the 78s away when I found out that the versions on the EP were NOT those of the 78s I had bought originally! Ah me, I've never really taken to that EP. So, I began to learn that Bing made different "takes", sang a song again a few years later, realised the old master record had worn out and Bing had done the song again....all those intriguing facets of this incredible recording phenomenon.

Then came the radiogram proper, long-playing records. Ah, what a boon they were, and are! What omissions could be rectified by the acquisition of LPs. I got, too, the junk-shop craze, spending hours and hours searching for such shops, and further hours going through musty, dusty, piles of old 78s - quickly passing over all except the magical black and gold Brunswick label. Thanks to Bing's massive output, you could safely count on two or three Bing's out of every five Brunswick labels!

The years went on with me totally enmeshed in this Crosby business... then came the sad day when I found I had few to talk to about Crosbyana. Oh, everybody still loved him, had his records, watched his films, but I found no soul-mate with my exacting and demanding all-embracing interest in Crosby... then I saw an advertisement in a record magazine - for the ICC! It was to Frank Murphy I first wrote - and in no time at all I found I was in harbour! I had found kindred spirits with a lasting and genuine interest in everything BING...it was a happy day I joined the club, which I thoroughly enjoy. I have had the pleasure, in company with my wife, of meeting so many fine people, especially at Michael Crampton's parties at Leeds - and the one last year celebrating 21 years of modern Crosbyana was truly memorable.

Now, the portable, the pick-up, the radiogram has all given way to a hi-fi stereo outfit and Bing, of course, sounds more fabulous than ever. Old 78s have been carefully taped minus the hiss and crackle, the lps sound fantastic - and one wonders what next? Such has been my life with Crosby. Not, perhaps, a remarkably rare story - but mine, and I've enjoyed telling it. There IS one thing left - to meet the grand Maestro himself, and say "Thank you, Bing..."

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